

The Effectiveness of The Church in Mission:
a Survey of Recent Ecumenical Studies.

by

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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Title of Thesis The Effectiveness of The Church in Mission: a survey of
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A study of the life of the Church of Jesus Christ with regard to the factors that contribute to its effectiveness in Mission, - with primary reference to the Protestant denominations of the West. Basic to the study is the premise that the Church is intended to be an effective instrument in the Mission of God in the world, that it has been so at times in its history and that it can be so in the twentieth century. The first chapter establishes the necessity and validity of the concept of effectiveness and suggests how this can be measured in practical terms. Next the Biblical evidence of the O.T. and the N.T. is briefly considered and the nature of the Church and its mission, in terms of the continuity of the people of God in the whole of Scripture, is set forth. Representative current writings on the nature of the Church and the Theology of Mission are critically examined to show the areas of agreement and disagreement.

In Chapter three, selected periods of the history of the Church, at those times when it has been generally agreed to have made an impact on the world, are briefly studied to derive the essential characteristics of the life and self-understanding of the Church at those times, and to show their relationship to the characteristics derived in Chapters one and two. The following chapter examines representative writings stemming from the World Council of Churches studies of the Mission of the Church. Areas of agreement and conflict in regard to the nature of Mission and the structures of the Church that are required for Mission are noted and discussed in the light of the evidence of the previous chapters. Finally, from a consideration of all the foregoing evidence, an attempt is made to show how the Church of today in the West can regain its effectiveness in mission through recovery of the biblical insights concerning itself and the world and through the use of structures that provide for the development of koinonia and the exercise of the diakonia of all the members.

SUMMARY

A study of the life of the Church of Jesus Christ with regard to the factors that contribute to its effectiveness in Mission, - with primary reference to the Protestant denominations of the West. Basic to the study is the premise that the Church is intended to be an effective instrument in the Mission of God in the world, that it has been so at times in its history and that it can be so in the twentieth century. The first chapter establishes the necessity and validity of the concept of effectiveness and suggests how this can be measured in practical terms. Next the Biblical evidence of the O.T. and the N.T. is briefly considered and the nature of the Church and its mission, in terms of the continuity of the people of God in the whole of Scripture, is set forth. Representative current writings on the nature of the Church and the Theology of Mission are critically examined to show the areas of agreement and disagreement.

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PREFACE

The study which is represented in this essay was begun out of the conviction that the Church, at least that portion of it represented by the Western Protestant denominations, which seems to have almost lost its way and is struggling to remain alive in this scientific and secular age could, through proper biblical insights, regain effectiveness in Mission. Study of the New Testament and Church history, as well as the experiences of some years of inter-denominational fellowship in missionary work in New Guinea and in witness in industry in Australia have strengthened the conviction that the Church could effectively contact people for Jesus Christ rather than turning them away as it seems to be doing at present. The following study is an effort to survey critically the suggestions of others who are also keenly concerned for the Church "to really become the Church", especially those that have arisen from within the orbit of the World Council of Churches, and to attempt a synthesis of these and my own ideas to show how the Western churches can again become effective in mission. I am not suggesting that there is only dismal failure on every hand at the present time, for this is manifestly untrue - some congregations are having a tremendous impact on the world. I am however asserting that generally the picture is one of stagnation or decline in the face of rising population; that this is contrary to the intention of God and that there is a solution to the problem.

I wish to acknowledge the example, help and encouragement of the many men and women who bore patiently with

me and by their example and teaching showed me the way in my first years of seeking to follow Jesus Christ as Lord, - without their example I could not have attempted this essay. I would also like to express my appreciation for the help and guidance of the Rev. Professor J.C. Blackie and the Rev. Dr. Andrew Ross of New College, who supervised this work. I however accept full responsibility for the assessments made and the conclusions reached. I especially wish to acknowledge the encouragement and the help of my wife who has made this study possible by taking over responsibility for providing for the needs of the family in order to leave me free to study.

Finally and most importantly I wish to acknowledge the gracious leading and disciplining of God who has brought me to this understanding. Whatever is of value in this study is ultimately His doing. "Unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end, Amen."

Declaration

This Thesis has been composed by myself and is the result of my own studies in the field of work discussed herein.

D.B. Fraser

Table of Contents

	Page
Summary	
Preface	
Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION	
Introduction	1
Church Growth Rate	12
Stewardship	14
Fellowship	17
The Plan of the Essay	20
Chapter 2 THE CHURCH IN SCRIPTURE	
Introduction	24
The People of God - The Ecclesia	27
Characteristics of the Ecclesia	33
The Divine Mission - The Oikonomia	41
Diakonia	48
The Missionary Task	60
Summary	71
Chapter 3 THE CHURCH IN HISTORY	
Introduction	74
The Church AD60 - AD300	77
Methodism Until 1791	81
The Salvation Army	88
Pentecostalism in Chile	92
The Interdenominational Evangelicals	98
Chapter 4 CURRENT DISCUSSION ON THE CHURCH AND MISSION	
Introduction	105
Nature of the Ecclesia	106
Mission of the Ecclesia	123
Structure of the Ecclesia	132
Fellowship	153
Size and Service	161
Conclusions	168
Chapter 5 RECOVERY OF EFFECTIVENESS IN MISSION	
Introduction	171
A Correct World View	177
A Correct View of the Ecclesia	181
Mission	186
The Life of the Ecclesia	196
Leadership	202
Prayer	207
Discipline and Standards	209
Records	213
Measurement of Effectiveness	214
Conclusions	219
Bibliography	221

Chapter 1.

INTRODUCTION

The current downward trend in the statistics of Church membership in the Western countries and the increasing secularisation of society in those countries has caused leaders of most Denominations to re-examine both the traditional role of the church in the world as well as the way in which it functions in the world. The fairly recent general recognition, stemming from the work of the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches, that the nature of the Church is Mission, rather than that the Church had a mission in the world, as though it had in itself some intrinsic value apart from its service, has brought about a fresh consideration of the role of the Church in society and how it should equip its members for their service in the world. The recent Statehood of many previously colonial countries has also raised the question of the relationship of the Church and its Missions in other countries and indeed the whole question of church expansion versus church "planting".

At the so-called "grass-roots", society has changed greatly in the last 30 years and this in turn has affected the life of the Church at local level. Shift work and Sunday work at penalty rates has become common practice with the result that many people are unable to attend worship at the traditional hours. Inner city dwellings have been taken over by migrants willing to live in sub-standard conditions as residents have moved to new housing estates. Family patterns have been broken up in the shift of families from

areas listed for demolition and reconstruction. Families move much more frequently and in some areas stay for only two or three years before moving to get better housing or a better job. The increased numbers of cars has meant that people are freer to travel in their weekends, visiting friends or relatives etc., often to the detriment of their church attendance. The advent of T.V. in nearly every home has meant that the Church has to compete with a highly sophisticated form of entertainment that seeks the attention of the lesser committed church-goers. Shorter working hours and more affluence, especially amongst the youth of the country, have brought a rise in the number and variety of clubs (e.g. discotheques) that compete for the attention of people both on weeknights and during the weekends - the traditional times for the functioning of the church.

Studies in the Sociology of religion of the last fifteen years or so have brought out aspects of church life in a new perspective and shown patterns of association and their relation to the social forces at work in the society which affect the way in which the Church seeks to interact with society. Theologians, seeking fresh ways of making the faith relevant to Western secular man, and trying to interpret the biblical revelation in terms that are meaningful in a secular society, have produced a variety of studies which cut across the traditional theological understandings of the Church. A few of the more "extreme" suggestions include the "Presence" theology¹ of witness and mission and

1. Hamilton, P. "The Living God and The Modern World", Hodder & Stoughton, London 1967.

the "non-transcendental"² theology for secular men. Some have advocated scrapping the traditional form of the church so that it will be free to participate in the world instead of leading a ghetto-like existence. Others have suggested a coordinated approach with other religions of the world to seek a new synthesis of religious truth.

Within the local church organisations, the sunday school, youth group, etc., there are problems of falling levels of attendance and service. Ministers find it harder to get the men to share in the life and work of the congregation. Attendance at bible study and prayer meetings has dwindled. The stewardship of money has not remained proportional to average income. The numbers of people offering for fulltime service in the church as ministers, missionaries, deaconesses or technical workers etc. has been dwindling steadily in the post-1945 years, in spite of the continuing demands for such people at home and the increasing ones overseas. Indecision exists throughout some of the sections of the Church concerning the standards required for becoming members and remaining on the roll of members.

The parish minister, concerned with the faithful fulfilling of his vocation and anxious to absorb and evaluate the stream of reports that are being produced around the world dealing with the problems that have been sketched out above,

2. e.g., van Buren, P. "The Secular Meaning of the Gospel" S.C.M., London 1963, and Robinson, J.A.T. "Honest To God" S.C.M., London 1963.

finds that very often the prescriptions they offer are conflicting and in other cases give little indication that all aspects of the life of the church have been taken into account. Many of the reports or articles in the literature are deliberately open-ended as the writers have considered it of more importance to air the problem they see than to state the solution that they envisage (if any). The "man-on-the-job" finds, in short, that at the present time there is such fragmentation of thinking in the theological world that it is of little immediate help to him. Usually the claims of his parish are such that he cannot afford the time to sit down and analyse all the written material for himself. Unless he is part of a team ministry, which is only the case in a small fraction of the parishes, he cannot hope to specialise on one aspect of his work. He must try to be concerned with all aspects of the life of the parish and yet evaluate his work in the light of current thinking - an almost impossible task.

The purpose of this essay is to examine the various areas of the daily life of the Church, particularly at parish level, in the light of the suggestions that have been made and the experiments that have been carried out, and to seek to integrate these into a coherent pattern that will have relevance for the local congregation. It will also suggest changes that should be made in the structures and the programmes of the Church in the light of such an examination. This statement assumes that the urban congregation will remain as a viable unit in contradistinction to some of the current ideas - an assumption that will be justified later in the

essay. It cannot of course be pretended that this essay will be completely definitive as far as prescribing a pattern for the church at least in the immediate future, - different observers will place different weight on some analyses and there are current experiments not yet reported that may well turn up fresh data which could lead to modified conclusions. Likewise, not all suggestions that will be made could be applied in every place with equal effectiveness because of differing conditions. Nevertheless it is maintained that there is much that can be done that will be productive in the life of the Church and make for its effectiveness in mission in the world. In this regard the word "effectiveness" has been deliberately used as it indicates an aspect of thinking that has been neglected by most people in the Church, - some because they consider that it is improper to use such a concept for Christian work, and some because they consider that it is impossible to measure. It will be shown that such a concept is necessary in order for the Church to make the most efficient use of its resources and that it is one that admits of measurement in a usable if not highly precise form.

The basic thesis of this essay is that the Church successfully achieves God's purpose for it in the world as it is true to the Apostolic pattern and message, as adapted to present society, and that there is sufficiently clear guidance in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments for this form to be determined in any generation. Further, the pattern that can be derived is both practicable and

realisable even in today's secular society and is in fact illustrated by some of the current rethinking of the nature and the role of the Church.

The penetration of the world by the Church has engaged many writers of late. The two major lines of investigation are those stemming from D.A. McGavran's early study of Church growth³ and carried out in the main by students of the School of Missions and Church Growth, Fuller Theological Seminary, California; and those arising from a decision of International Missionary Council in 1954⁴ to commission a series of studies of the life of the Church in various parts of the world to determine the factors that contribute to the spread of Christianity. This rather broad aim was later narrowed at the 1968 Assembly of the W.C.C.⁵ to give attention to "the vitality of a Church judged by it's ability to respond positively to the factors that impinge upon the whole human society in which it is set".

The general contention of McGavran is essentially identical to the thesis of this essay, namely, that growth of the church is normal and is to be expected. The studies flowing from this viewpoint seek to document the contention and to pick out the factors that contribute to growth. The W.C.C. series of studies, fifteen in all, were compared by a small committee of the Division of World Mission and Evangelism

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3. McGavran, D.A. "How Churches Grow", World Dominion Press, London 1959.
 4. International Missionary Council Minutes, p77ff, New York, 1954.
 5. "Uppsala Speaks", p202, W.C.C., Geneva 1968.

and the results published in the report "Can Churches Be Compared".⁶ The committee's conclusion is that the fifteen studies "have proved gloriously disappointing in disclosing a simple pattern of cause and effect in Church development" (p.99). The report continues: "...to say whether any response was positive or negative, advance or regression, is impossible". The committee indicates that they worked under many difficulties, the principal one being the non-uniformity of the make-up of the investigatory teams and their methods. Nevertheless they came to the definite conclusion that the variations of form of the churches in practice and the diversity of their cultural situations made it impossible to speak of common factors that make for effectiveness or otherwise in mission.

The W.C.C. report speaks of more studies being necessary,⁷ yet on its own argument this would only serve to confirm the diversity of the nature of the local congregational patterns. As some of the churches studied show remarkable growth rates, for example the Chilean Pentecostal movement reported in "Haven For The Masses",⁸ and as there were suggested reasons for this growth, it is strange that the Committee concluded that there were no discernible patterns of growth. This is especially disappointing as the Chilean situation shows great parallels to the Pentecostal growth in Brazil which was reported by W.R. Read.⁹ The reasons for such a failure are

6. Mackie, S.G. (Ed.) "Can Churches Be Compared", Friendship Press, New York 1970.

7. Op.cit. p.88f.

8. d'Epinau, C.L. "The Haven Of The Masses", Lutterworth, London 1969.

9. Read, W.R. "New Patterns of Church Growth In Brazil", Eerdmans, Grand-Rapids 1965.

partly discernible within the W.C.C. report. There is confusion between the sociological and theological aspects of the life of the Church (p.23) at several places. Whilst recognising for example (p.93), that the Church is challenged to obedience in a particular culture, the Committee is unwilling to accept the usual sociological description of the Church and calls on sociologists to recognise the "Church as sui generis". A further factor is the form of the Uppsala statement which failed to give a definition of "positive response". This could be interpreted in a number of ways and the Committee failed to indicate what it meant in their thinking and hence in their evaluation of the fifteen reports.

The lack of a normative pattern of life in the Church makes it impossible for the W.C.C. Committee to come to definite conclusions even though it speaks of life, growth, vitality etc. They support their lack of a definite conclusion in this regard by exegesis (eisegis?) of Revelation 2 and 3.¹⁰ It is disappointing that they did not seek behind cultural overlays for some basic "spiritual factors" for these are to be found in most of the reports if not all of them. This hesitancy to seek biblical criteria is even more strange in the light of the opinion expressed on page 97 that "they believe. . .that a vital Church cannot continue in its failure to respond (to external situations)... and that a Church which responds must thereby gain something of the spiritual liveliness that it previously failed to manifest". (emphasis mine).

10. Op.cit.

A further example of this unwillingness to come to grips with the problem of growth and vitality is given in the report of the W.C.C. study groups on the Missionary structure of the Church "The Church For Others" in which it is stated¹¹ that the Church should give up its concern for success in terms of numbers and activities and its ideas of proselyting. Instead, the Church is to let the world set an agenda for it to follow. What is then suggested is a form, which will enable the Church to show the world what it ought to be, and which will be controlled by the existence of human needs in the world and be free to respond to such need. Only by this approach says the report, will the Church be free to be its self in the truest sense, and only thus will it be liberated from its past shackles. However admirable such an approach may appear, its correctness will be considered later, it must be asked whether in fact the effort to get away from any concern with size and growth will not also make it impossible to check whether the Church is really being the Church. Unless some criteria are applied there is no means of determining whether the approach is a correct one or not or whether the Church has mis-read the World's agenda. A wrong approach could be adopted just as easily as the correct one! In view of the widely differing views that are current concerning the nature and mission of the Church, it would appear that this question could not be resolved theologically. And even supposing that agreement were obtained at a theological

11. W.C.C., "The Church For Others", p.19, Geneva 1967.

level, a further logical difficulty remains. According to the Study Group of the W.C.C., the Church's task is to make the world aware of what it should be. This implies that the Church must continue in some recognisable form and that there must also be some means of knowing whether the world is aware of the church and whether it is taking notice of it. This would mean that some criteria would need to be established to determine whether the church was being effective in its witness. This brings us right back to the questions of numbers (attracted to the Church) and influence exerted by the Church in the world.

Although the church is supernatural in its origin, in that it is the creation of the Holy Spirit, it is visibly manifest in the world and has to be dealt with in its human form as a group of people or a community with a common purpose. As recent study on the nature of the Church and its mission has made clear (see Chapter 2) the Church exists not for itself or for the mutual enjoyment of its members but rather to glorify God and to be the instrument of His mission in the world. As the Lord Jesus Christ revealed the Love of the Father and the true nature of manhood, and was also the means of redemption of the world, so the Church is both to seek to reveal by its corporate life the true nature of man as well as to be the means of mediating this Gospel to the rest of the world. Its task is not just to bear witness but also to seek people to participate in this new life.

To achieve its mission, some formal structures are necessary in the Church in order to maintain order, preserve

purity of doctrine, nurture the members etc. On the one hand there are the inward activities of worship and the nurture of its members and on the other hand there are the outward activities of evangelism, helping others etc. Both sets of activities involve organisation, leadership, defining of strategies, mobilising of resources and action. As with any human organisation, all these activities are amenable to monitoring and to audit, - Monitoring implies the concept of checking that plans are being properly implemented and resources used efficiently, whilst auditing implies the checking and evaluating of methods used in terms of results achieved. It is the double concept of checking the methods and measuring results that leads to the concept of effectiveness. An effective Church is one which is achieving results in an efficient manner.

Before considering some of the criteria that may be used for measuring the effectiveness of the Church's mission, one cautionary note must be sounded. It is possible to organise the activities of the Church in accordance with techniques derived from psychological and other insights, and to achieve quite spectacular results in terms of numbers, finance etc. However, as the Church is primarily a community of the Spirit and only derivatively a human one, the methods employed must also be those which are in accordance with principles God has set forth. The real crux of the problem therefore becomes that of determining how the Church can truly discern what is in accordance with the will of God and what is only the will of men. Several criteria can be suggested as measuring sticks

for the effectiveness of the Church. Their use and value will have to be seen in relation to the whole life and pattern of the Church as this is examined in the later chapters.

Church Growth Rate

Although the W.C.C. report "Church for Others" rejected the idea of "counting heads", yet the Divine promise to Abraham was that his descendants would become a great multitude in number (Gen.13:16). From the day of Pentecost the church grew rapidly in numbers and spread throughout the Roman Empire. The work of foreign missions has in many cases shown spectacular "results" as far as the growth of the church was concerned. The book of Revelation speaks of the ten thousands times ten thousands who will surround the Throne of the Lamb in worship (Rev. 5:11). Clearly, God is interested in numbers, for it is His will "that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). However, numbers alone are not an adequate guide to the effectiveness of any particular congregation, for a popular preacher may draw people from other areas who are dissatisfied with the life of their own congregation. A truer picture of the effectiveness would be given by the increase in numbers from the local area of the congregation rather than by including those from other areas. That is, rate of growth of a congregation in response to the preaching of the Gospel in an area is a better indication of the effectiveness of the Church. McGavran has put it, that it is the growth rate within a given area that is a true criterion of effectiveness.

On the other hand, R.C. Johnson in "The Church and its Changing Ministry"¹² seems to oppose the idea of numbers because he thinks that this has focussed attention on people as individuals rather than on the Christian community as a whole and because it has brought in its wake the problem of provision of suitable buildings and facilities. Johnson contends that the Christian community is the important thing and that attention must be given to enabling the church to develop according to the biblical pattern. There is no real anti-thesis between McGavran and Johnson, the former is concerned with the fact that there should be real growth from within an area whereas the latter is really concerned that the size of the congregation should not increase beyond the point where it ceases to be a real community. (This latter point will be taken up again when the matter of fellowship is discussed - the question of growth is the present concern). It is obvious that several cautions should be added at this point. Firstly, it should be noted that McGavran has developed his concept principally in relation to the evangelisation of pagan territory rather than areas of so-called christian civilisation. The W.C.C. ecumenical study, "Evangelism in France"¹³ has stressed that the whole of that country must now be regarded as a field for evangelisation for "we are now in a post-christian era". Statistics of church attendance in Western Europe bear out the fact that only a very small percentage of

12. Johnson, R.C. (Ed.) "The Church and Its Changing Ministry" p.24ff, United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., Philadelphia, 1961.

13. W.C.C., "Evangelism in France", Geneva 1951.

the population have any real commitment to Jesus Christ and His Church. This situation is similar to the French one and probably justifies the same conclusion, namely, that the whole of Western Europe is a mission field. This means that the concept of growth rate of the local congregation is likely to remain a valid criterion of effectiveness for some time, at least until the active membership of the Church approaches 50% of the community. Certainly in Europe the criterion can be used for many years to come, as there is not only the matter of getting new families involved in the life of the Church but also the problem of drawing the second generation of Church families into active membership.

A second caution in the use of the single criterion of growth rate concerns the effect of unequal age distribution within a given area. There could be a temporary drop in the growth rate as older members die, and until a much younger generation grew to membership age. A similar kind of situation can also arise where migrants of another religion gradually take over a housing area as in parts of London, Birmingham, Glasgow etc., or where the area changes its nature from a predominantly residential one to say that of a professional or industrial area.

Stewardship

A second criterion that can be used to test the effectiveness of Mission of the local Church is that of stewardship. The term is here taken in its widest sense to mean the individual members' participation in the Mission of the Church, and involves his use of time and possessions

to that end. The stewardship of the whole congregation in mobilising and utilising its total resources is also a valid criterion of effectiveness. It has often been customary to include also the use of talents when discussing stewardship as though these are some natural possession that man can dedicate to God's service. Whilst such a view could be sustained in non-christian endeavours, this is not so in the case of the Church for, biblically speaking, talents are God's gift to man to use in His service. Basically, man can only offer to God his time and his possessions, that is, himself; - he can exercise the gifts of the Spirit as they are given to him.

The central understanding of stewardship comes from Paul's teaching concerning the Christian as a bond-servant of Christ - as one who has been purchased or redeemed by Christ and is therefore no longer his own master. The Christian is the man who has willingly accepted this situation (as did the bond-servant in the O.T.) and sees himself as God's steward, entrusted with His message and His gifts and responsible for their proper use. The steward's time and possessions belong therefore to his master whom he seeks to please and honour in all that he does. Some men may be called to devote themselves as full-time servants of the Church. As they have no time to support themselves they have to rely on others sharing in this ministry by providing them with the necessities of living. Others may be called to labour in some secular occupation or profession whilst giving "spare-time" service in the mission of the Church. This is not to deny that a

man cannot and does not serve God in the factory or office through his work but simply to indicate that in the Divine economy some are called to support others so that the latter may give themselves fulltime to a particular form of service.

Responsible stewardship of time means that a man does not limit himself to serving God only one hour per week in worship and then living as he pleases the rest of the time. Rather, he offers himself for service in the mission of the Church, either within the formal structures of the local congregation or in some other way. It is possible therefore to assess the effectiveness of the Church in terms of the manpower that is available for Christian service and preparation for service. (It is assumed for the present that the particular form of service is a legitimate one and that the nature of the Mission of God is correctly understood by the congregation.) A truly effective Church would not be limited in its work by the shortage of man-power. A word of caution must be added at this point - it may take some time for the congregation to grow in their understanding of the nature of stewardship and in their practice of it. It would however be reasonable to conclude that after say ten years of consecutive ministry any difficulty in obtaining manpower for the proper work of the church was due to faulty understanding of the concept of stewardship in either the minister or the members. Conversely, an abundance of volunteers would tend to indicate that the people had grasped, or better, been grasped by, the proper understanding of their responsibility and privilege.

Fellowship

It is becoming increasingly recognised, as evidenced by many recent articles, that Christian fellowship is a vital part of the life of the Church and that effectiveness in mission is intimately related to it. It is here contended that real fellowship within a congregation is a valid criterion for determining the effectiveness of that congregation. Although, because of its nature it cannot be measured directly, it can be measured indirectly by assessing the facilities that exist for its promotion within the congregation. J. Stott¹⁴ has pointed out that biblically, the concept of fellowship has three components. First there is the individual Christian's participation (koinonia) in Christ, His benefits and His sufferings; which is symbolised by the sacraments. Secondly there is the sharing in the life of fellow-Christians (koinonia) through the acceptance, encouragement, assistance and admonishment of one another. Thirdly there is the corporate sharing or participating (koinonia) of the whole congregation in the mission of God to the world through evangelism, witness and service. (Fellowship in the biblical sense of the word is not to be confused with organisations i.e. Youth Fellowship etc., nor with the number and type of meetings.) The first and last components of fellowship cannot develop without the second in which Christians come to experience more and more the building up of one another

14. Stott, J.R.W. "One People", Falcon, London 1969.

in love (Paul speaks of the edifying of the church). The group is thereby transformed into one to which other people will want to come and in which they too will feel accepted.

An effective Church is therefore one in which there is opportunity for the meeting together of the members for genuine edification and preparation for service. The criterion of effectiveness would be the percentage of the total congregation that are participating in such groups. (It is assumed for this purpose that the groups are properly led and structured.) There are of course the questions of the relationship of groups to one another and that of minister to people which will have a bearing on the effectiveness of the groups, but these do not affect the validity of the criterion.

Full-time Christian Service

Although recent reports, such as that of the Western European working group of the World Council of Church's on the Missionary Structure of the Congregation, have claimed that there are no permanently valid forms of church structure, this does not alter the fact that the church always requires enough workers to carry out its total mission at any time in history. The strategy and the way in which the church organises for its mission may change, but it will always be true that men and women will be needed in sufficient numbers not only to maintain the life and mission of the church but also to extend it. The type of service and the nature of training needed for such people will change with time and the church has to be able to discern and meet the need for such

change. Nevertheless the effectiveness of the church is determined, amongst other things, by its continuous production of the necessary numbers of people for these various ministries.

To develop a practical criterion for effectiveness of a Church in producing people for ministry within the Church, we may consider the following figures. In an average congregation of 250 people, it would require one person to offer and train for the preaching ministry every 20 to 25 years (according to statistics of retiral, death and resignation) in order to maintain the status quo. To provide for an advance of the Church in the world this figure would have to be improved to say one person in 10 years. For mission service in other countries of the world (to use a current staffing problem) it would be necessary for any congregation wanting to share in the wider mission of the Church to provide a worker every ten years (allowing for the shorter term of service that is usual because of problems of health, education of children etc.). On the average then, a worker of one kind or another would be required every seven years from each congregation to maintain the situation. If the Church is to extend its influence then it would be necessary for workers to offer at the rate of say one every five years on the average. Whilst this criteria could not be applied to each individual congregation, because of the variability of conditions that exist, it would be quite valid on an area basis which included say ten or more congregations.

Participation of Christians in Society

This is really an aspect of the stewardship of time. It involves not only the Christian attitude to work, which sees it as an opportunity to glorify God and to serve one's fellow men, but also what may be called the "second mile" concept of service - namely the giving of voluntary service in such organisations as the Scouts, Parent-Teacher Associations, sporting bodies, unions, political parties etc. Hence a measure of Christian stewardship is also found in the extent to which members of a congregation permeate the community, serving others in a voluntary capacity in secular organisations. It is difficult to find an objective measuring device for this kind of service or to lay down a criterion of service because of the problem of establishing the extent to which such service is taking place and because of the fact that many members of the congregation may be so involved in serving in the structures of the congregation that they have no time for service in other organisations in the community.

The Plan of the Essay

In order that the criteria briefly outlined above may be properly applied it is essential that a correct understanding of the nature of Church and Mission be reached. The second chapter is therefore devoted to an examination of the Biblical evidence concerning the Old and the New People of God and the part they had to play in the purposes of God. In particular the Apostolic form of the Church is treated in some detail to derive essential characteristics that have abiding validity.

In this chapter the writings of several biblical scholars and missiologists are critically examined and conclusions drawn as to the Biblical picture of Church and Mission. In chapter three the conclusions of the previous chapter are compared with the characteristics of the Church at those times in history when it has been generally agreed to have been effective in its outreach to the world. A brief survey of two modern movements, Pentecostal and Interdenominational groups is also given to elucidate their essential characteristics. The next chapter contains a review of some of the main writings dealing with the mission of the Church that have originated from the World Council of Churches and its related bodies or have been triggered off by such studies.

No attempt is made to show the chronological developments of these ideas but rather to draw out the implications and assumptions that are involved in so far as they militate for or against the effectiveness of the Church in Mission. The current discussion as to the nature of mission which has become the central area of debate in ecumenical circles is dealt with in some detail against the background of the biblical understanding set forth in chapter two.

Chapter five is devoted to an examination of the programmes of the Church that are required in order that it may fulfil its mission effectively. This covers the maturation of the people of God in the worship and study of the Church, the various ministries that exist and the preparation of people to fill them, the outreach of the Church with the Gospel and in social service and the involvement of

the whole congregation in this work. (In the essay no consideration will be given to the specifically theological aspects of Christian Education or Education for the Ministry or to the programmes that these entail. However it will be clear that some consideration of the contents of these courses will have to be made in the light of the observations in this essay.) The tentative nature of the findings must be emphasised - they represent, as far as the author is aware, one of the first comprehensive attempts to relate the re-thinking of the nature of the Church and Mission to the daily life of the Church.

In the limitations of space it has not been possible to examine all recent writings on the subject of Church and Mission. The selection has therefore been limited to representative writings in English. Continental literature on the subject has been referred to only when it has appeared in translation. An effort has been made in the following chapters to develop a consistent use of terms and in particular to distinguish between the Church and the denominations. For that reason reference is made for example to the Roman Catholic denomination and *ecclesia* is used for Church and churches. Likewise, the word *ministry* is retained for any type of service rather than referring to a special class of people - for them the term *clergy* is used. Whilst such an approach may appear pedantic it is clear that much confusion about the Church and Mission has been facilitated if not precipitated by careless and unbiblical use of terms. For this reason it is thought helpful to return to some of the

technical terms of Scripture - we have good precedents for this in the common use of such terms in many fields of knowledge today.

Chapter 2.

THE CHURCH IN SCRIPTURE

Introduction

In the previous chapter the thesis was developed that it is the intention of God that the ecclesia (whose precise nature is yet to be defined) should grow and influence men and women in all parts of the world and in all times. Beginning at Jerusalem, the witness to Jesus Christ was to be taken centrifugally through Judea and Samaria to the uttermost parts of the inhabited world. Church history is the record of the currently ongoing fulfilment of the Divine command and intention. In some places and at some times in history, there has been a great surge forward both territorially and numerically whilst at other times and in other places there has been stagnation or recession. In some places, notably in the lands conquered by Moslem princes there was an almost complete obliteration of the Christian Church. At other times, whole populations have become "Christians" at the threat of a sword or simply in response to the change of heart of their leaders. (The so-called 'peoples movements'). The extent of the ecclesia and its influence in the world has depended at any one time in history, not only on the external influences such as competing and sometimes overtly hostile religious groups and states, but also on its own internal nature. It is also obvious that at any one time those classified as Christians either by the Denomination or the State or self-description,

have been greater in number than true believers. Self-interest, superficial attraction etc., have often swelled the numbers of the Church in peaceful times, whereas in times of active persecution the outward professors of Christianity have usually fallen away to leave only the "true believers".

In speaking of the ecclesia therefore, it is essential to have a clear understanding of what it is and what are its essential characteristics. Without such criteria it would be impossible to evaluate the reasons for growth or decay and thereby to determine what is vital for the life and mission of the ecclesia in the Twentieth Century. Sociological factors have always had some effect, and have operated to promote or hinder the life of the ecclesia. At times, psychological and economic factors have been the basic reasons for growth rather than what may for the moment be called spiritual factors. A typical example is the initial fund-raising campaigns that brought not only much needed finance into the local congregations but also, for a time, increased attendances at worship. At the opposite extreme, the "spiritual" factors may be exemplified by the periodic revivals within the ecclesia in which not only the life of the members is transformed but also outsiders are attracted to it. Although revivals take place in concrete sociological conditions yet there is no correlation with these conditions. In making such a comparison it has to be remembered that a congregation is a mixed human community and therefore subject to both kinds of influence to a greater or lesser degree.

The problem is not just one as to which are the spiritual and desirable influences, but also whether or not there is a place for the purely human influences. Some writers have argued that all things which contribute to the life of the ecclesia are to be accepted and hence they infer that there is no dichotomy of influences and factors. This view presupposes that the ecclesia is essentially a human organisation and that its growth is simply categorised by the increase in numbers or increase in income. Others however would argue that such views are dangerous and misleading and may ultimately work against the life of the ecclesia.

Before it is possible to disentangle and evaluate the various factors, the true nature and purpose of the ecclesia must be first determined. The variety of self-understanding and modes of functioning that can be observed in the various denominations of the world today suggests, at the very least, that reliance should not be placed on the views of any one denomination. It is also true that many of the denominations are re-thinking these aspects as is evidenced most clearly, but not exclusively, by the Vatican Council II Decree on the Church.¹ There has been a spate of writings on this subject, triggered off by the discussions on the unity of Churches arising both from within the activities of the World Council of Churches and from the need to rethink the nature of mission. A further contributory factor has been the efforts within the various denominations to come to terms with the changing

1. Abbott, W.M. (Ed.) "Documents of Vatican II" Decree "De Ecclesia" Chapman, London 1967.

nature of modern life and the alienation of large sections of the population in the Christian countries of the West. The outcome has been a radical re-consideration of the nature and purpose of the ecclesia during the last twenty years.

It is not possible in this essay to trace this development or to adequately assess the various strands of thinking that have emerged. It must suffice to state what to the writer appears to be the understanding that most adequately takes account of all the biblical data and indicate only the important divergences in understanding. The view set out treats the Old and New Testaments as a unity both as regards the matter of election of the people of God, their relationship to God, each other and the world as well as their function in the Mission of God. From it results certain conclusions concerning the life and service of the people of God which are relevant to the current debate on Mission.

The People of God - The Ecclesia

Whilst some writers have regarded the New Testament ecclesia as a new creation of Pentecost, the majority of recent writers have seen it as contiguous with the Old Israel although manifesting different features. R.N. Flew² states that it was "the universal conviction of the early Christians that the Church was the true Israel", which could be traced to Jesus Himself. "The consciousness of severance from the

2. Flew, R.N. "Jesus And His Church", p.18, Epworth, London 1938.

worship and ritual of Israel is not an essential element in this conviction. They were heirs of a great tradition, stretching far back to the call of Abraham." Morris³ and older conservative writers prefer to speak of a people of God going back past Abraham and claim that there has always been a people of God.

It is clear from the book of Acts that the Apostles and the first believers saw themselves as part of the ongoing fulfilment of the Abrahamic covenant promises. They met at first in the temple for prayer and worship, and even Paul, after the controversies over the circumcision of Gentile believers, could enter into the Jewish purificatory vows of the Temple. His Epistle to the Romans deals at length (Chaps. 9-11) with the relationship of Jews and Believers in Christ. To him, the old was not permanently discarded to be forgotten, but rather, in the mysteries of God, to continue for some time in parallel existence until God regrafted them into the true Israel.

It is not the purpose of this essay to discuss the "remnant" problem, as to whether it was the true Israel as part of the whole nation of Israel at the time of Christ, or whether Jesus was Himself the remnant. Nor is it intended to discuss the relationship between the official religion of the time of Jesus, which must properly be called Judaism, to that set out in the Old Testament and which alone can properly be called the religion of Israel. It is sufficient to observe

3. Morris, "Ecclesiology" p. 19, Charles Scribner, New York 1885.

here that there were those who looked for the coming of Messiah, who were humbly seeking to serve the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,^{who} sought to fulfil His commandments and who welcomed and followed Jesus. There was a true remnant of the elect people of God obedient to His commandments and seeking to love Him with all their hearts.⁴ In the main they had little to do with the official class of priests and recognised Teachers of the Law nevertheless they served the God of Israel and observed His statutes (e.g. Joseph and Mary observed the laws on purification and dedication, and the whole family observed the great feasts of the Jewish year at Jerusalem.)

Regardless of how the remnant is defined, the continuity of the People of God is preserved between Old and New Testaments and this bears in turn on the nature of the Church and the structures that are to exist within it. For this reason, what constituted the nature of the Old Israel in relation to God and to her neighbour as well as the internal structures of the nation, is relevant to the new Israel, though modified and transcended in many ways. Brunner⁵ for example speaks of the supercession of the old cultic laws, including the temple and the sacrifices, the replacement of the particularistic election with a universal one and the replacement of a church/state relationship in which the two

4. See Flew (op.cit.) for a discussion of this matter in terms of the "little flock" and the remnant, p.53ff.

5. Brunner, E. "The Misunderstanding Of The Church" p.20ff, Lutterworth, London 1952.

were virtually indistinguishable under the old covenant with a fellowship that could exist under any form of state and to which it was to render obedience. Torrance⁶ insists that the continuity is allowable only as the Church is considered as gathered up and incorporated into Christ - "we cannot bypass the Resurrection".

Before considering the essential characteristics of the ecclesia, the question of its relationship to the Kingdom of God must first be examined briefly. H.R. Niebuhr⁷ relates the two in dialectical fashion - the Church is not the Kingdom but there is no apprehension of such a Kingdom except in the Church. The Kingdom has the primacy and independence of Divine reality which can and does act outside the ecclesia whereas the ecclesia, which is a human community related to God through Jesus Christ, can properly be termed an institution. Brunner⁸ on the other hand denies the institutional aspect of the ecclesia, claiming that this precipitated the misunderstanding which occurred in the post-apostolic period, and emphasises that it is the community of the Spirit. The Kingdom of God had indeed come, in the presence of Jesus (Matt. 12:28, Luke 11:20) but it was a concealed one as far as the world was concerned. Its full manifestation was yet and is still in the future for it is a Kingdom that is not of this world.

6. Torrance, T.F. "Conflict And Agreement Within The Church, Vol. I" p. 212. Lutterworth, London 1959.

7. Niebuhr, H.R. "The Purpose of the Church And It's Ministry" p.19ff. Harper and Brothers, New York 1956.

8. Op.cit. p. 12f.

This apparent conflict of views is synthesised by R.N. Flew⁹ who emphasises the idea of Basileia as referring to rule and sovereignty rather than to the realm or place of influence or control. He points out how the concept of realm passed through Augustine into the thinking of the Roman Catholic writers and tends to obscure even Protestant thinking today. It cannot however, be exercised without that which is ruled over and which in common usage is called the kingdom, that is, the community who are included within and who accept the reign of the King. Whilst there can thus be no simple identity of Kingdom and ecclesia at this present time, yet they cannot be separated. In Jesus Christ, the Kingdom of God, the Divine rule, has been manifested and the power of God has come into the world, (Brunner speaks of this as realised eschatology - the dawning of a new age) yet this is a unique event. The people of God in the Old Testament and the New Testament are those in whom the Kingly rule of God is only partial. They are a community called by Him in which His reign is to be manifested, yet they do not, even in the new dispensation of the Holy Spirit, display the full manifestation of the Kingdom, for they are still sinful men. They bear evidences of the Kingdom but not its fullness - some writers have therefore spoken of the ecclesia as "having the already but not yet fully" nature of the Kingdom of God.

Whilst there are important differences in the old Israel and the new Israel, these twin aspects of the Kingdom of God

9. Op.cit., pp.23-40. See also Schmidt in Theol. Dict. of N.T., Vol. I in article on Basileia - Basileus p.576ff. Erdmans, Grand Rapids 1964.

are discernible. God is the King of Israel and His people willingly accept His reign (i.e. as at the ratification of the Covenant at Sinai and again in the time of Nehemiah etc.) and promise to serve Him. In the new Israel the ecclesia, the reign of Christ is acknowledged and His people serve Him as Lord.

Küng¹⁰ warns of the danger of identifying the ecclesia as 'God's Kingdom on Earth', or 'the present form of the Kingdom of God', because it leads to a wrong understanding of the nature and the function of the ecclesia and to the kind of exaltation of the earthly organisation that took place in the Middle Ages and to the view that the Church establishes the Kingdom.¹¹ On the other hand the view which defines the Church as something quite different from the Kingdom does not do justice to the N.T. texts. Israel of the O.T. has a spiritual unity with the ecclesia of the New Testament (Acts 7:3, Rom. II:16-24, Eph. 2:11-22) but neither are identical with the Kingdom which God will bring. The Kingdom of God has appeared in Christ, is pointed to by the Church, but will come into its fullness in the parousia. It is not of the fashion of this world's kingdoms for Jesus said "my kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). Although its realisation is in the future yet the believer comes in contact with the Kingdom in various ways - he receives the Kingdom as a child (Mark 10:15), he is transferred into the Kingdom (Col. 1:13) etc.

10. Küng, H. "The Church", Burns and Oates, London 1968.

11. See for example Wiedner, F. "The Doctrine Of The Church", Revell, New York 1903.

In Jesus Christ the Kingdom has come into the midst of men and the believer participates derivatively in this Kingdom as he participates in Christ by virtue of the work of the Holy Spirit. H. Berkhof,¹² speaks of it as a "little bit of realised Kingdom, a prophecy of the symmorphia to which the Spirit is pressing forward. We can therefore speak of the double aspect of the Church; realisation of the Kingdom and instrument of the Kingdom."

Characteristics of The Ecclesia

Minnear¹³ lists some 96 images or analogies of the ecclesia that are to be found in the New Testament. These he categorises under four main headings - the People of God, the New Creation, the Fellowship of Faith and the Body of Christ. Here we shall treat the images under the two headings of the People of God, and the Community of the Spirit.

The first image is that of the ecclesia or the People of God. Schmidt¹⁴ shows that 'ecclesia' is used in the New Testament to denote a congregation or gathering of people, and that it is used indiscriminately to describe either one group or a whole series of groups. Although the term was also applied to secular gatherings (Acts 19:32, 39, 40 etc.) its use in Scripture generally, according to Schmidt, requires

12. Berkhof, H. "The Doctrine of The Holy Spirit" p. 39, John Knox, Virginia 1964.

13. Minnear, P. "Images Of The Church In The New Testament" Westminster, Philadelphia 1960.

14. Schmidt, K.L. in Theol. Dict. of N.T., Vol. III, p.504ff, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1965.

the attribute "of God" to be understood in order that the term may be given its full import. Ecclesia is in essence the redeemed and called out community just as the qahal in the Old Testament (translated ecclesia in LXX in the majority of cases) is the community redeemed from bondage in Egypt and called to be God's people. In both cases the essential nature of the community consists in its calling by God - that is to say, its primary characteristic is that of the Divine initiative and action by which it is constituted. There are of course significant differences between the old and new (renewed) communities of Israel, but their common factor is that they both exist as a result of Divine calling. In both, the Sovereignty and Grace of God is paramount. Israel is not called because of inherent possibilities for fulfilling God's purposes, in fact, the opposite is true - Israel is called at the time of the Sinaitic Covenant in spite of its stiff-necked attitude (Ex. 9:6f). The calling of the twelve to be Apostles again displays the divine sovereignty of Christ and Paul echoes this thought in Ephesians 2:8, that calling (and salvation) is a matter of Sovereign grace.

The people of God are called out from the people of the world to be a distinct and outwardly recognisable group. Thus, Abraham is called out of Ur and Israel is called to be separate from the nations round about. In the New Testament, Christ calls the twelve from their occupations and residence to be with Him and to serve Him - they are to have no abiding place of their own. The N.T. speaks of the believers as strangers and pilgrims in the world, who have been called from

all nations and whose real citizenship is in heaven. They are to be in this world, but not to be conformed to or controlled by the standards, values and attitudes of the world. Israel was likewise to repudiate, as a nation, the practices of idol-worship and immorality of the nations which she was to dispossess in Palestine as well as those surrounding Palestine. By her observance of ceremonial (cultic) laws and the Sabbath and the other Statutes she was to be distinguished from these nations. The basis of the nature of the ecclesia is therefore to be found in the gracious act of God, by which, through His Spirit and in fulfilment of the eternal covenant which He made with His Son, men and women are called, regenerated and made members of Christ.

The practical outcome of the Divine initiative is that the ecclesia is incorporated "into Christ" and therefore into God (John 17) and are not only made members of Christ's Body but are related to one another in a closer bond than that of nationality and blood kinship as in the Old Israel. In the Old Testament the external sign of the qahal was circumcision which signified incorporation into the nation of the people of God. In the New Israel the circumcision is an inward work of the Spirit, and baptism and communion are the outward signs of membership. The differences are not those of different orders, for even in the Old Testament we find the exhortation to "circumcise your hearts" (Deut. 10:16), but such as to indicate both a continuity and a development of the work of the Holy Spirit in establishing the people of God. The Old Testament Covenants can be seen as successive

acts, each particularising further the grace of God and the true life of man, and culminating in the final and new (renewed?) covenant in Christ. Here the grace of God was fully disclosed, the true nature of man as the image of God was fully manifested and the relationship of God and His people was made more intimate by the work of the Spirit. The older dogmaticians spoke of the first covenant of Grace in the 'proto-evangelium' (Gen. 3:15) in which all men were included, the Noahic covenant in which all nature was included, the Abrahamic covenant in which the particularistic aspect of God's grace become apparent and spiritual blessings promised (faith becomes the inward precondition), and the Sinaitic covenant which established a State, formalised the worship of the people, and by typical statutes and sacrifices prepared the way for the New Covenant in Christ. Paul's commentaries on the Covenants are illuminating - he sees (Romans and Galatians) the Abrahamic as the more important to which is added the Sinaitic one - adapted to the needs of a rebellious people yet offering them hope. L. Berkhof¹⁵ speaks of Law and Grace in the Old Testament - the Law prescribing and limiting man's behaviour (for his own good) and ^{Grace} ~~the Gospel~~ offering hope of reconciliation and blessing. He is not referring just to the Ten Commandments but to the whole Torah or instruction of God. God's grace is apparent in all the Covenants, for that is His nature, but in the New Covenant, Grace is predominant. Law however

15. Berkhof, L. "Systematic Theology", p.621ff. Banner of Truth Trust, London 1958.

is still present for the believers are not yet perfected and need instruction. (Thus Lutheran insight has been largely lost in the Reformed and Radical traditions yet is clearly attested both in the Gospel records as well as the Pauline Epistles.)

The second image is that of a community of the Spirit. In Romans 8:2-17 Paul indicates the essential work of the Spirit of God in constituting those who belong to and participate in Christ as His Body. Jesus' words to Nicodemus (John 3:5) point to the same fact, namely, that only by the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit can men participate in the life of the Kingdom. The Law, despite Rabbinnical teachings to the contrary, can never lead to life - in fact it leads to death for it convicts us all justly of our sin (Gal. 2 & 3). Christ alone can set free from judgement and this He does through His Spirit. (The Law only confirmed our guilt, pointed to our inability to be righteous in God's sight and awakened the need of forgiveness. Law, says Paul, came in to increase the awareness of sin in order that the Grace of God might abound (Rom. 5:18-21, Gal. 3:19,23,24)).

The ecclesia therefore comprises those called by God and joined to Christ by the effective work of the Holy Spirit. As a community of the Spirit, the boundaries of the ecclesia can only be discernible to God - an insight which led the Reformers to speak of an Invisible ecclesia which was contained largely within but was not coincident with a visible congregation. That is to say, the question of who is and who is not a member of the ecclesia is a matter that cannot

be decided by man, even in council with his fellow-believers. This viewpoint has been rejected by the Roman Catholic denomination which equates the ecclesia with those incorporated in the denomination by its official sacramental acts. K ng¹⁶ seeks to reconcile these opposite viewpoints in terms of the 'credo ecclesiam' - i.e., as a visible group of persons whose true nature is apprehended only by faith. This approach goes only part of the way to resolve the very practical problem of dealing with the boundaries of the ecclesia - if it is the work of the Spirit, how can sinful man recognise the limits of this work, and if he cannot, how is he to deal with the questions of membership, sacraments etc.? Again the analogy of the Old Israel is helpful. Just as all male children of Israel were circumcised and included within the nation, yet not all were recognised as the seed of Abraham by God (Rom. 9:6-8). So too, in the ecclesia the children of believers and others may be counted among the congregation, having participated in the ordinances of baptism, confirmation, profession of faith etc., and yet may not have received the Spirit's ingrafting into Christ. They participate in the earthly blessings of the ecclesia just as all the nation of Israel participated in its earthly blessings, yet they are not known to Christ. Many of the modern treatments of the theology of mission assume a universal salvation already effected but not recognised by men (although this makes much of the O.T. and parts of the N.T. irrelevant) and thus equate ecclesia and world.

16. Op.cit., pp.34-39.

The consequences of the work of the Spirit are several. Firstly, men have fellowship with the Father and with the Son - Koinonia with God becomes a reality in its true sense. 2 Peter 1:4 speaks of Koinonia in the Divine nature. The believer, through the work of the Holy Spirit, now shares in Christ - "we are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ" Paul declares at Romans 8:17. I John 1:3 speaks of the fellowship which we have with the Father and the Son. Various symbols are used to designate this relationship - Body of Christ, Temple of the Spirit, etc., but they all point to the fact that God has restored man to his intended relationship as a result of the reconciling work of the Son and the enabling work of the Holy Spirit. Paul uses such terms as "I live yet not I but Christ liveth in me---", "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature (creation)" to describe this relationship. It is more than a community sharing together, for there are many such in the world that are not the ecclesia; it is nothing less than Divine participation in the human. The ecclesia is not to be confused with Christ in His exalted state, nor is it perfect in its nature or members - it is not Christ though it is called the Body of Christ. Yet on the other hand, it is not to be separated from Christ nor cut off from the Divine energy - it is the body of which He is the Head and whose members function under the control of the Head.

The second aspect of the work of the Spirit has to do with the relation of members (Koinonia) one to another in the ecclesia. Paul speaks of Titus as his partner (Koinonos)

in serving the Corinthian Church (2 Corinthians 8:23) and of the Philippian Christians as sharing (sunkoinesante) in his trouble and in partnering (ekoinonese) him in his needs (Phil. 4:14,15). Acts 2:42,44, 4:32 speak of the sharing in common (fellowship) of goods and study and worship of the early ecclesia. The bond, which the disciples have to Christ, places them in a special relationship to one another - they have the status of adopted children of the one Father and hence have a relationship to each other that transcends mere association of like-minded persons, and binds them into a mutually responsible group. The word "fellowship" has become so variously interpreted in common speech that it fails to bring out the real force of the Greek "koinonia". The R.S.V. translation of the word koinonia as 'partnership' brings out more of the meaning of both receiving as well as giving, rejoicing as well as lamenting, enjoyment as well as responsibility. The relationship is summed up in Jesus' command "love one another as I have loved you". If by the Spirit, the ecclesia is related to the Father and the Son, and if by the same Spirit they are related to one another, then love is to be a dominating characteristic of their relationship to each other.

There is a third aspect of the work of the Spirit that characterises the ecclesia, namely that of the koinonia of the Gospel (Phil. 1:5)-the sharing of the mission of God in the bearing of the Good News to all the world, in the healing of the sick, the liberating of the captives, the gaining of justice for the oppressed. Of the detailed nature of this

task we shall speak shortly, - here it is sufficient to note that koinonia has an outward aspect to the World as well as a vertical one to God and an inward one within the Fellowship.

The Divine Mission - The Oikonomia of the Church

Various definitions have been offered for the function of the ecclesia. Niebuhr has defined the task of the ecclesia as "increasing the Love of God and neighbours in the world".¹⁷ Older dogmaticians spoke of the task of the church in terms of its responsibility for witnessing to the truth (potestas dogmatica), administering proper internal discipline (postestas gubernaus) and healing the afflicted (ministerium misericordiai).¹⁸ All these functions, however praiseworthy they may be, are derived functions rather than the basic task of the ecclesia. In order to understand the situation we must first look at the part that Israel was to play, according to the O.T. record. Vicedom¹⁹ states that "Israel is the congregation (qahal) of God which has become the centre of the world of nations so that the heathen may join it and through Israel learn to know the one God and the true worship of God. In and through Israel, therefore, the Kingdom becomes apparent." Israel is chosen and elected, for a purpose which Vicedom describes as God's Mission to the world.

17. Op.cit. p. 27ff.

18. See for example Berkhof, L. op.cit., p.594ff.

19. Vicedom, G.F. "The Mission Of God" p.34, Concordia, St. Louis 1965.

She is not elected for preferential treatment or because she deserves it, but that she may be the means of fulfilment of the promise in Genesis 12 that in Abraham's seed all nations may be blessed. Israel was to be an example to the nations of how God deals with His people in blessing them by separating them to Himself, so that they (the nations) may be warned of the consequences of their idolatry and attracted to Yahweh, the only true God.

The promise to the nations coincides with the election of Abraham and thus the election points past the blessing, which it entails in itself, to the Divine intention of extending that blessing to the nations. God's intention is that all mankind should be redeemed and the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants are steps on the way to this fulfilment in Jesus Christ. The fellowship lost between God and man, in which the creature seeks to be independent of his Creator and consequently brings death and suffering on himself, is to be restored. Toward this end an elect people are needed. Israel was to be a light to the Gentiles (Isaiah 42:6) until the True Light should come, who lights every man that comes into the World (John 1:9).

Although some writers have sought to see a specific missionary mandate in the Old Testament, in terms of a going out from Israel to the nations, e.g. in Jonah and Isaiah, it is the general concensus that Israel's function is rather the opposite - that is, it is to be a light drawing the nations to itself. This thought finds expression in the prophets who speak of the nations as coming to Israel, (Is. 2:2-5,

Mic. 4:1ff, Zech. 8:20f). Blauw,²⁰ after speaking of the fact of Israel's election from among all the nations goes on to say "it is quite plain that He who made the nations (Ps. 86:9) and who has made them His nations (Ps. 87) is also the only one who can call them to Himself. That which will bring the World of Nations to Him is not Israel's calling them, nor her going out to them, but exclusively the visible manifestation of the deeds of God in and with Israel; only so will they recognise Yahweh as their God....." In the Old Testament there is an eschatological expectation, especially in the latter prophets, that Yahweh will cause the nations to seek the Lord - just as He has sought out Israel in the past. In the present, God will make known His power and His blessing through Israel. Israel's election then was to the intent that she should be an example to the nations so that by her life the rule of God, with its blessing (or, more accurately, which is blessing) would become evident to the world. The calling of Israel was that it should so live under the Kingship of God that the peoples of the world might know the reality of God's purposes for man and be drawn to Him.

The true nature of the election, i.e. as pointing through Israel to the nations, is illustrated in part by the treatment of the "strangers in the midst". Although having no claims by right of birth within the nation of Israel and hence within the Covenant, they are yet to be accorded the same privileges as long as they accept the laws and ordinances

20. Blauw, J. "The Missionary Nature of The Church", p.37, Lutterworth, London 1962.

and statutes of Yahweh (2 Chron. 6:32ff). The purpose of election is also illustrated by the attitude to proselytism seen in later Judaism in which considerable effort was made to draw outsiders into the Nation. Vicedom²¹ suggests that under the influence of the later prophets, Israel came to an understanding of a remnant as the true Israel, which was the bearer of revelation to the world and the means of God's salvation. That is, the true Israel is no longer coincident with the blood descendants of the Twelve Tribes, but rather with those who seek to realise the kingdom of God in their own lives. Here the way is clearly opened for a widening of the understanding of the Israel of God to include not only the sons of Abraham by blood relationship but the outsiders who are sons by virtue of faith.

In this brief survey we cannot deal with the development of Israel's self-understanding or consider the recurring apostasy and repentance that characterised her life. We are here concerned only with the function that Israel was intended to play. T.F. Torrance²² has put it that under the Sinaitic Covenant, God established Israel as his people, bringing them into communion with Himself, setting up His Kingdom in their midst and opening up "through Israel a new and a living way of redemption of mankind that was to find fulfilment in Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth, and the Life". Martin-Achard²³ sums up the purpose of Israel's election thus -

21. Op.cit., p. 48ff.

22. Op.cit., p.288f.

23. Martin-Achard, R. "A Light To The Nations" p.76, Oliver and Boyd, London 1962.

"Israel's task is to be the Chosen People, that is to say, it is to be the nation in which Yahweh is at work and whose existence is meaningless apart from the intervention of God. By being in the world Israel testifies to the unique greatness of its God and so summons the Gentiles to join with it in worshipping Yahweh".

The Missio Dei is carried a stage further by Jesus, and from His resurrection until His Parousia the ecclesia shares in that mission ("as the Father has sent me, so send I you"). The ecclesia is the present tool of God in achieving His purpose of calling men to accept His Lordship and to be incorporated into His Kingdom. Vicedom takes the Willingen Conference (1952) document in which the concept of the Church as mission is first spelled out, as his basis, and then proceeds to show how this mission originates in the Triune God and is carried on by Him. Israel was the people of God before Christ which was chosen in order that the nations through it might come to know and to serve the True God. Now, the ecclesia, the body of Christ, is called to participate in the ongoing mission of God to the nations.

Using a different approach, A.C. Conrad²⁴ deals with the purpose of the Church in terms of the Oikonomia of God as set out in Eph. 1:10---"a plan (oikonomian)---to unite all things in Him (Christ), things in Heaven and things on earth". This stewardship is accomplished through the ecclesia as Paul states in Col. 1:25f---"According to the 'oikonomian' which

24. Conrad, A.C. "The Divine Economy", Baptist Conference Press, Illinois 1954.

was given to me for you to make the Word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now made manifest to His Saints---Christ in you, the hope of Glory." The same thought appears in I Cor. 4:1 where Paul talks of believers as God's oikonomous (stewards) and in I Cor. 9:17 where he speaks of being entrusted with a oikonomian. Conrad grounds the stewardship in the Trinity and shows how this is worked out in the life of the believer. From the stewardship of God the Father, the believer derives his concept of purpose and his trusteeship and responsibility. From the Stewardship of God the Son, the believer derives his insight into God's grace which awakens in him the desire to be a partner with Christ in fulfilling His purpose. From the stewardship of God the Holy Spirit, the believer derives the enabling for a living faith which bears fruit in obedient and dedicated service. Through the believer's faith in God the Holy Spirit consecrates him to be a steward fulfilling God's works.

The above approaches are not in reality opposed to one another - the first focusses on the ecclesia as a whole whilst the second, quite deliberately, focusses on the response of the individual member of the ecclesia. The response of the whole is in one sense, quantitatively, dependent on the responses of the individuals to the oikonomia which is given them. The parable of Luke 16:1ff stresses the individualness of the responsibility and office of the steward - he has the use of his Master's resources, not for his own enjoyment but that his Master's interests may be advanced. The parables

of the talents speak in similar vein of the responsibility that is given to the Lord's stewards and which one day will be reckoned up. As in the Old Testament, the New Testament regards man as individually as well as corporately responsible to God for his actions. The claim sometimes made that the New Testament knows nothing of a private or individual religion, overlooks the biblical injunction of the prophets and of the Lord Jesus Christ to men as individuals - men are responsible for their deeds and the discharge of the Divine stewardship. Whilst the nation Israel, as a nation, is castigated for its idolatry, yet the members of the nation are also castigated for their individual failures - the priests as unfaithful shepherds, the rich as unfeeling oppressors of the poor etc. On the other hand, the sin of the individual is also counted as the sin of the people.

Thus, in speaking of the *oikonomia* of the *ecclesia* we have to consider both the corporate and the individual aspects of this concept. The *ecclesia*, as the body of Christ, continues the Divine stewardship of God the Son under the direction and enabling of God the Holy Spirit, enjoying the relationship which this entails, worshipping the One who makes it possible and serving Him in the world. The member of the *ecclesia*, as a member of the body of Christ has a specific function to fulfil (we shall speak later of the *charisma* for specific services) and a responsibility to discharge this both within the congregation and to the world. The responsibility has a threefold aspect - Godward in worship, to the other members in sharing and encouraging and to the

world in witness and service. This pattern is discernible in the life of Jesus, who worshipped in the synagogues "as was His custom", attended the great feasts of the Temple, prayed to His Father, yet enjoyed the company of His disciples, shared their joy and griefs, taught and encouraged them, and also taught the multitudes, preached the gospel of the Kingdom, healed the sick, raised the lame etc. The ecclesia as the body of Christ, sharing in His nature and life is called to live in a like manner; worshipping, fellowshiping, and witnessing and serving. So also the member of the body, the individual believer, is called to worship, to share in the life of other believers, and to bear witness to God in the world by his words and deeds.

Diakonia - Charisma for Service

The previous sections have dealt briefly with the essential aspects of the nature and the purpose of ecclesia. It is now necessary to consider the means by which the oikonomia is carried out and the development of the koinonia is fostered.

In the old Israel, there were at different times prophets, priests and rulers with specific responsibilities in the life of the qahal. The priests offered man's worship and his sacrifice to God and at the same time mediated God's blessing upon the people. They were also responsible for a knowledge of the Torah amongst the people. The rulers were responsible for the order of the community, the dispensation of justice, and the leadership of the nation

in battle. The prophets had specific and occasional responsibilities for declaring a 'Word' from God to His people. The different offices could not always be distinguished as in the case of Moses, who was both prophet and ruler, or David, who was both ruler and priest. There were also certain schools of prophets, who seemed to have no specific origin. (Rowley²⁵ has set out very fully the various aspects of the life of the nation.) In all the main offices there was almost invariably the special appointment or call of God and usually some manifestation by way of ecstatic utterance as confirmation to the nation. The appointment of the seventy-two elders in Numbers 11 is 'sealed' by their prophesying. Saul's anointing to be King is 'sealed' by his prophesying. Alternatively, the office may have been an inherited one through divine appointment as in the case of the Levitical priests - or the descendants of David to rule on the throne of Judah.

The first characteristic of leadership or special service in Israel was the fact that it was not a matter of human decision either by democratic process or unilateral seizure - it was by Divine appointment or calling. This does not mean that all positions of authority were thus filled - the Old Testament record clearly indicates that this was not so in the case of the rulers of Israel after the death of Jereboam, or in the case of the false prophets in Judah. It does mean however that where the Divine Will was accepted and obeyed,

25. Rowley, H.H. "Worship in Ancient Israel", S.P.C.K., London 1967.

such positions had the authority of God behind them. Israel was thus a theocratic community amongst whom God had appointed certain individuals to specific positions of service for the well-being of the nation. Many of them were unwilling candidates either because of their own sense of lack of the qualifications necessary for the task, or because they were over-awed by the prospects. The second characteristic of leadership and service in Israel was that those chosen and called were also enabled for the task that was given them. Solomon recognised his lack of wisdom and was given this in full measure, - Moses claimed inability to speak to Pharaoh and was granted a mouthpiece in Aaron his brother, - Gideon was doubtful of his ability to rally a nation but was given evidence of God's power.

As a nation, Israel was subject to Yahweh who had called it into being. He established it as His nation and in turn it was to serve Him only. He alone was its King. Although it has been argued that God intended Israel to be ruled by a human King, First Samuel clearly indicates that it was in response to Israel's turning away from God that a king is permitted (albeit foreseen) in the wisdom of God. Just as Paul reminds readers in his letter to the Galatians that the Law was given because of sin and not as a means of righteousness, so the general thrust of the Old Testament is that human Kingship becomes necessary because the people turn away from God's rule. As the sacrifices of the Sinaitic covenant were types of the Atonement, so the human King was a type to signify the nature of the Theocratic rule, and to execute the

judgments of God. (2 Samuel 10 indicates that the King is not to be a law to himself but is to be guided in all things by the words of God's Law.) Both the Law and the Kingship were temporary institutions accommodated to the needs of a sinful and stiff-necked people, and within them certain individuals were appointed and enabled for service on behalf of the qahal.

In Israel those divinely called and appointed for service as priests, kings etc. within the Nation had a diakonia to discharge on behalf of the nation - to God and to the people. To them was given an enabling (charisma) for that service. The rest of the people of Israel also had a command to love the Lord with all their mind and soul and strength, and their neighbours as themselves, but there is no record of a special calling to this service, or a special enabling to carry it out. Such a possibility is not thereby excluded but we can only state that, within the Covenant, members of it by birth or as proselytes enjoyed the promised blessings of God, (I Kings 8:56f) as they obeyed His instructions. Their task was to be God's people in reality so that the function of Israel as a light to the Gentiles might be fulfilled.

Although Kingship was welcomed by Israel as a means of providing a visible centre of unity, yet it failed to achieve this purpose as is made clear by the record of the O.T. historical books. The priests who had been given the task of maintaining a true understanding of God and His service also failed by and large in their responsibility. The Exile in



Babylon which followed the spiritual decline of the nation has been pointed to as part of the process by which God then prepared His people to understand the true nature of His Kingdom. The Synagogue now became the place where worship and teaching were preserved. Controlled by Elders, it promulgated the teaching of the Torah and was supremely the means of maintaining the true worship of God. Here there was a joint leadership which conducted the worship, taught from the authoritative books, decided disputes etc etc. The synagogue, which later functioned in parallel with the Temple, was specifically adapted to the places of dispersion where access to the Temple was difficult if not impossible for the majority of the people. It represented a partial return to the early form of the life of Israel - at least spiritually. Now the scribe fulfilled the function of the priest in teaching the Torah and elders took the place of the Judges and the rulers. It became on the one hand rather institutionalised and yet it was also the means of maintaining alive the religious life of Israel. Through the captivity Israel was being prepared for the time when the place of worship would no longer be significant (John 4:21) but only truth and spirit would be necessary. The synagogue was another means to God's ends.

In the New Testament ecclesia there is a change in the administration of the Covenant of grace - every member is a royal priest, every member is commissioned for a service of some form and every member has received an enabling for this service. In the ecclesia, God has given gifts (charismata)

to each for edifying or building up of the body, for the mutual encouragement of one another, that every man may be perfected in his faith and life. In I Cor. 12:4ff Paul discusses the varieties of service in the ecclesia and the various charismata that are given by the Spirit. In Eph. 4:11ff Paul speaks of the grace (Charis) that was given to the Saints for the equipping of apostles, prophets, teachers, evangelists for the purpose of equipping all the saints for works of service (ergon diakonias) "for the building up of the body of Christ - till all attain the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ". Here the thought is that of mutual service, one to the other, as the Spirit of Christ enables, so that the whole body may be brought to maturity. Some writers²⁶ have suggested that the comma in Eph. 4:2 should be removed so that the section would read "...for the work of the ministry of the building up of the body" in the sense that clergy are to train up the rest of the members so that they can fulfil their service. This is a superficially attractive emendation but it does not fit with the general tenor of the New Testament. As all members are priests, all have a ministry (diakonia) or service of one to another so that they build each other up as verse 16 of Eph. 4 makes clear. The Divine gifts equip for the service of one another, for the purpose of mutual building up - "till we all come to mature manhood." Whilst the purpose of the gifts is a common one, the nature of the gifts and hence the form of the diakonia are clearly distinguished. Again, in Romans

26. Hanson, A.T. "The Pioneer Ministry" p.105, S.C.M., London 1961.

12:3-8, Paul indicates the varieties of charismata given to different members of the body which are to be employed for the benefit of the body. As compared with Israel, in which only certain individuals appeared to receive an enabling for service, every individual in the ecclesia receives not only the regenerating work of the Spirit but also a charisma for service. Just as those in Israel, so gifted, were to minister to God (Ex. 24:13, I Sam. 2:11 etc.) and to the people, now the believers are to minister to one another, according to the gifts they have received - they are all ministers or diakonoi.

Two questions remain - is there a hierarchy of gifts and hence of orders of service and is there a special setting apart of some diakonoi from the rest of the members of the ecclesia as in Israel. Although traditionally the exegesis of Eph. 4:11ff has been of an order of importance of service within the ecclesia, beginning with the apostles, Hanson²⁷ and Bornkamm²⁸ have shown that this is not supported by the rest of the New Testament. There are occasions for example when Paul submits to the decisions of the local ecclesia whereas on others he insists on apostolic authority to order a certain line of action. Küng²⁹ seems to infer that there is an order of importance and includes with the Pauline list, deacons, elders, and bishops as being public functions. In

27. Op.cit., p.104.

28. Theol. Dict. of N.T. Vol. VI, p.664f. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1968.

29. Op.cit., p.395.

seeking to relate the post-apostolic development of an hierarchical structure of bishop, presbyter, deacon to the New Testament evidence, he confuses the nature and the purpose of the functions. All have a diakonia, as Küng rightly observes earlier, hence all are diakonoi or ministers. Whilst the order of appearance or manifestation of the gifted persons in any one place may tend to have a certain sequence, e.g. apostle first and later helpers, this does not imply in itself an order of authority. All authority in the ecclesia is Christ's, who gives to certain people certain ministries - Bornkamm³⁰ speaks of authority being derived from the diakonia but that status was not thereby conferred on the one carrying out that service. Each member is to recognise the others' God-given gift and submit himself to it. In this mutual submission to one another's gifts the ecclesia was to build up one-another into the 'mature' man.

On the question of certain persons having responsibility over others it is clear that whilst there is New Testament evidence for oversight of the ecclesia by certain people, there is no one pattern as to how this was to be exercised. The biblical studies in this field agree only on the point that there is no single pattern - for the forms of oversight vary considerably in their interpretation. In the making of decisions in matters of doctrine, in the oversight of local ecclesia, certain types of individuals figure in the New Testament evidence. In Acts 15 the Apostles and Elders at Jerusalem in a council decide on the matter of Judaizing

30. Op.cit., p.664.

practices whilst in other places, apostles acted unilaterally. Some have suggested that James played the role of leader in the same way in which the High-Priest ruled the Sanhedrin. Others have suggested that the Palestinian ecclesia were modelled on the pattern of the synagogue with its elders and leader or ruler, whilst in other areas which were predominantly of Greek composition, - the office of episcopos or overseer may have been carried over from secular organisations (this possibility is seen in the Pauline Epistles and Acts).

In Acts 6 the election of seven men for the 'diakonein trapedzais' takes place so that the apostles could be free for the 'diakonia tou logou'. This has generally been interpreted as the genesis of an order of deacons within the ecclesia to attend to material needs of people as distinct from a 'spiritual' ministry. However, it is clear from the text that these men were to be full of the Holy Spirit (Acts 6:5) and the subsequent ministry of some of them had more significance in spiritual than material terms (Acts 8:5ff). Küng³¹ too easily passes over this New Testament evidence and separates deacons into the category of givers of alms, tenders of sick etc., rather than recognising the multi-nature role of many of the early christians.

One function of special importance is the oversight of others in the ecclesia (Acts 20:28ff, I Pet. 5:1ff) for which certain qualifications were needed. Those chosen were to be

31. Op.cit., p.184ff and 393ff.

accorded the honour and obedience due to the function whilst they were not to lord it over the ecclesia but rather to serve it. It also seems clear that growth brought a change in the structure of the local ecclesia - in the beginning the apostle or evangelist would occupy the position of sole authority (the 'pioneer minister' to use Hanson's term), but with the growth of the ecclesia, elders would soon be appointed (Acts 14:23, Tit. 1:5) to continue the work of teaching, preaching, evangelising, and shepherding. Individual oversight was purely a temporary necessity - as soon as there were suitable men available within the ecclesia they would be appointed jointly to the task of oversight.

The second question to be considered concerning diakonia is that of ordination as the term is understood today. The New Testament references are sparse - in Acts 6:3-6 the seven men have hands laid on them by the apostles in preparation for their serving of tables. In Acts 13:3, Paul and Barnabas have hands laid on them by the prophets and teachers of Antioch in preparation for their Spirit-directed service as missionaries and in Acts 14:23, Paul and Barnabas ordained elders by "stretching out their hands". In 2 Tim. 1:6 Paul refers to the gift of God given through the laying on of his hands. Annanias laid hands on Saul that he might recover his sight (Acts 9:17ff). Paul laid hands on the disciples at Ephesus and they received the Holy Spirit. It was also used for the handling of relief funds 2 Cor. 8:19. Whilst there is a clear Old Testament precedent for the passing of authority by the laying on of hands (Deut. 34:9) and in rabbinical Judaism for the authorising of disciples as accredited teachers,

there is no consistent pattern in the New Testament that corresponds to present-day practice.

Torrance³² sees the laying on of hands as marking out and delimiting the sphere of operation of the apostolic ministry as it was passed on. It is a sign attesting the faithful transmission of the kerygma and didache of Christ, - as in the rabbinical attestation of their disciples. The Roman Catholic denomination has maintained that the act of Ordination conveys grace as well as signifying the setting aside of the candidate to the particular task. K ng³³ says that the act itself is not the chief thing but an effective sign of the working of the Spirit. On the other hand Flew³⁴ takes the view that in the apostolic ecclesia it was hardly likely that any importance was attached to the laying on of hands! It could be argued that the New Testament evidence points rather to the laying on of hands for a particular purpose such as evangelism or the reception of the Holy Spirit than to the setting apart to some office of responsibility over the ecclesia. It did not even appear to be essential in all such instances, unless it is posited that not every case is recorded in the New Testament. It is impossible therefore to conclude that the act was essential to the performance of any particular diakonia or to the reception of the Holy Spirit. Nor is it possible on the basis of

32. Op.cit., p.32f.

33. Op.cit., p.426f.

34. Op.cit., p.203f.

Old Testament analogy³⁵ to suggest that it was essential to the task. The clearest O.T. case, Numbers 27:18-23, suggests that the laying on of hands was a visual commissioning of someone already chosen and enabled by God ("Take Joshua, the son of Nun, a man in whom the Spirit is, and lay your hand upon him---and you shall commission him in their sight", vv.18 & 19.) At most, it is an outward recognition and acceptance of a spiritual gift in a particular person by the ecclesia. (It is interesting that the COCU proposal for the Church of Christ Uniting in the U.S.A. provides for representatives of the congregation to take part in the laying on of hands at the ordination of presbyters etc.)³⁶

We can sum up the foregoing discussion as follows: There was in the New Testament ecclesia no ceremony equivalent to the ordination of clergy today. All charismata were for diakonia, God the Holy Spirit giving as He pleased in sovereign grace. The task of the ecclesia was to recognise these gifts and to be subject to them, each member submitting voluntarily to the gift of God in others for the building up of the ecclesia (Ephesians 5:21 - "be subject to one another", Romans 12:10 - "outdoing one another in showing honour".) Over and above this mutual edification of believers certain men were appointed or commissioned (either by the Apostles or by election from within the membership), to have oversight of the ecclesia. Their task was to feed the flock and

35. See for example Swete, H.B. article "Laying On Of Hands" Hastings Bible Dictionary Vol. III, p.84f, Clark, Edinburgh 1900.

36. Consultation On Church Union. "A Plan For Union", Princeton 1970.

protect it from 'wolves' as under-shepherds of The Shepherd, (I Pet. 5:2-4, Acts 20:28-31). This oversight was not to be exercised in a monarchical pattern - it was itself a form of diakonia to the ecclesia for which they were responsible to Christ (I Pet. 5:3), but one which should naturally elicit the respect of the members (I Cor. 16:16). Others were appointed to specific forms of service such as evangelism or fund raising. For all forms of service some commissioning or public acceptance by the ecclesia was usual and the laying on of hands was part of this acceptance and recognition of responsibility and ability.

The Missionary Task - Serving the World.

The main purpose of the ecclesia is its participation in, or better, its use in the Missio Dei. The first task of building up the fellowship is in one sense a preparation for the second - without it, the second could not adequately be carried out. In the case of Israel, we saw that its place in the mission of God to mankind was to be a light showing up the true purpose and end of man in relation to God. The new Israel, now that the new age has come, is to be dispersed into all the world as ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:19f) and witnesses (Acts 1:8) of Jesus Christ. The persecution at Jerusalem and the scattering of the disciples (Acts 8:1-4) may be viewed as part of the purpose of God for the spreading of the Gospel to all nations. The ecclesia was promised no earthly security or worldly peace in this task. Paul's call to service (Acts 9:16) included the promise of sufferings for

Christ's sake, and his letters bear testimony to his life of hardships as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. The writer to the Hebrews likewise reminds his readers of the sufferings of the Old Testament saints and counsels them to gird up their loins for the struggle, "for they have not resisted unto death (12:4)". The historical data in Acts records the persecution that the Christians suffered for their faith and their rejoicing in the knowledge that they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ (Acts 5:41).

Through, and above the human actions of the Christian community was the initiative of God, the Holy Spirit. As He had called men and women into the Body of Christ, and had given charismata for the building up of the fellowship and for the ordering of its life, so He initiated and directed the missionary outreach. First, the witness is given to Israel, Acts 4:8ff, 4:31, then Samaria, Acts 8:4ff, and then to strangers, Acts 8:26ff. Paul and Barnabas are directed in their missionary task by the Spirit who both leads and forbids (Acts 16:6f) their actions.

In the New Testament, the Gospel is taken first to the Jews, both those in Jerusalem and its surroundings and then to the Jews of the Dispersion. From historical records as well as the record of the New Testament, it is clear that Jewish communities were established in most of the bigger cities of the Roman empire and in Northern Africa. Worshipping with these Jews were a considerable number of proselytes and other Gentiles who were attracted by the monotheistic worship

and the exemplary life of the devout Jews. Whilst there may be some argument as to the exact numbers of 'God-fearing' Gentiles who had attached themselves to the Synagogues, it is clear that it was a large number (cf. Jesus' comment at Matt. 23:15). There was thus a large potential audience for the Gospel within Judaism and its adherents. Of the purely Gentile audiences we hear less in the New Testament although it is clear that these are not neglected (Acts 17:16ff) as the subsequent history of the ecclesia bears out. The particularism of God's dealing with the nation of Israel has passed and now there is no difference between Jew and Greek - "all have sinned and come short of the Glory of God" and all must repent and believe on His Son Jesus Christ.

J. Blauw³⁷ discusses the interpretation that must be given to the words of Christ to "go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature" and "make disciples of all nations" and concludes that this meant primarily a going over the boundaries of the nation of Israel to the Gentiles rather than purely geographical boundaries. The ethnē are to be considered on a racial basis rather than in terms of distance from Jerusalem.³⁸ Thus the missionary task is directed to all outside of the ecclesia - Israel and the nations. Racial and national characteristics have no importance and even the Jew, with all his great religious heritage (which should dispose him to the revelation of God

37. Op.cit., p.109ff.

38. See also Vicedom, op.cit., p.100ff.

in Christ) has no claim to precedence as far as the Kingdom is concerned. The question of family relationships cannot be discussed here in detail but it may be noted that the children of believers were counted in the ecclesia. (As in Israel, the parents were responsible for the instruction of their children in the faith). The expansion of the church took place therefore both by 'natural' increase within the families of believers and by spiritual conquest through the preaching of the Gospel to the heathen.

In its participation in the Missio Dei, the ecclesia is commanded to 'separate' from the world, and not to be conformed to it (Rom. 12:2 etc.). It is chosen out of the world although it is to work and witness in all the world (the Kosmos)(John 15:19, 17:15f). The term 'world' as it is used in John's Gospel and in the ~~final~~^{first} Epistle of John is a synonym for mankind in general. In John 1:10 there is a hint that the whole of creation may be in mind but the phrase "and the world knew Him not" clearly relates to the cognition of human beings. Although in the Old Testament, especially in the Psalms and the Prophets, the trees and mountains and other parts of nature are spoken of as praising God in anthropomorphic terms, this feature is absent from the Gospels and the Epistles. The plain sense of the Johanine usage is that of the society or community of man. Hence the ecclesia stands separated from the Kosmos by its life and 'law' of love as Old Israel did amongst the nations of the world. A correct understanding of the mission in the world rests therefore on a proper understanding of the biblical

usage of the term "world".

The world in the first place is the community of mankind which is destined to perish but which stands confident in its ability to determine its own destiny. It is the same world which is the object of God's love and which He sent His Son to redeem. It is this mankind which God does not will to perish but which He desires to come to repentance and serve and Honour Him (2 Pet. 3:9). It is the world which, in the sin of its independence of its Creator and its claim to be able to determine its own life, God now seeks through the agency of His people. It is the world that has lost its way and needs to be called back to the Way.

In the second place, the world as C.W. Williams³⁹ points out, is described in the New Testament as under an alien power (2 Cor. 4:4), at enmity with its Creator (James 4:4) and having its own standards and patterns of life which are contrary to those of God (I John 2:15). The world is not an amoral neutral community, ignorant of its true nature, but rather a community with its own inner dynamic and energy which enslaves people and is a continual snare to the members of the ecclesia (I John 2:15). Sasse⁴⁰ speaks of the world as the creation of God that has been shattered by the Fall and, veiled now by the power of darkness, stands under the judgement of God. There is within the world a collection of powers under The Prince of this world, that display animosity to God and

39. Williams, C.W. "New Directions In Theology, Vol. 4, The Church" p.32ff, Lutterworth, London 1969.

40. Sasse, H. article "kosmos" in Theol. Dict. of N.T. Vol. III, p.893f, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1967.

His people and who use the world to carry out their purposes.

It is the revelation of Christ as Saviour that discloses the true nature of the world and at the same time the purpose and love of God. Because, by Divine standards the world needed a Saviour, says Sasse, the nature of its opposition and the consequences of its opposition both in this life and in the world to come are fully disclosed. The ambiguity of the rabbinic teaching of the world as partly good and yet needing renewal is replaced in the N.T. with the Divine declaration that the whole world stands under judgement. The world is the antithesis of the kingdom of God and men need to be translated from it by God to escape the judgement that will come upon it. For this reason the ecclesia is not to love the ways and the standards of the world - they are opposed to those of God and will one day perish.

The world in the third place is the object of God's reconciling love, to which He sent His Son and to which He now sends the Ecclesia in the name of His Son. God has purposed to call out a people for His name on whom He may show mercy and grant the adoption as sons. To them He has entrusted the responsibility of proclaiming the Gospel of His love and calling other men to repent and turn to Him. The world then is the field of service for the ecclesia - in it they are to evangelise and display in their own lives the reality and the blessing of this new life. They cannot turn their backs on it for this would be to deny their Lord - they are to be in it for the benefit of the world, but not of it as far as their way of life is concerned.

Not only are the standards and principles of behaviour of the ecclesia to be different from those of the world in whose midst it exists, but this very difference will occasion persecution just as Christ's life occasioned a violent reaction from the Jews. If it is being true to its Lord, the life of the ecclesia is a judgement against the life of the world with its standards, values and systems of philosophy, and as such will draw reaction from the world. This radical disjunction of ecclesia and kosmos is clearly spelled out in the New Testament - it is not to love the things of the world because this is enmity to God (I John 2:15), its preachers are not to use worldly wisdom (I Cor. 1:20f), its members have escaped from the lusts of the world (I Cor. 7:31) etc.

The function or *oikonomia* of the ecclesia in the world involves the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ - the handing on of the Apostolic message, and of laying the foundations of the ecclesia in all parts of the world. Although the original definition of an apostle may have referred to an extra-ordinary office (e.g. as in Acts 1:21f) the term connotes a function rather than a qualification as is clear from the usage in Acts 14:14, Rom. 16:7, 2 Cor. 11:13 and Rev. 2:2. It is this function which is an enduring one in the ecclesia and which is recognised in the description "Holy, Catholic and Apostolic" as used in the Creeds. This does not mean that every person played the part of an apostle - only those chosen by the Spirit could

be so called.⁴¹ This apostolic function is exercised on behalf of the ecclesia which is responsible for its support and administration. This Divine selection does not mean any diminution of every individual's responsibility to witness in his surroundings to the reality of the new life in Christ in the power of the Spirit - on the contrary, this aspect is implicit in the exhortation in the Epistles to live a life pleasing to God.

The relation of one group of believers to that in another town is clearly defined in the New Testament. Some would probably have claimed loyalty to one of the apostles as their founder and hence may have extended less than full recognition to others. Even here however, the evidence is conflicting because in the case of Corinth there was a split of loyalty which suggested that several 'Apostles' had served there. Such partisanship is rebuked by Paul who points them to Christ as their Head and therefore their source of unity. The unity of the ecclesia in its Head is stressed and this was generally the basis for the relationship between the ecclesia. The response of the believers in various cities in welcoming Paul (Acts 21) indicates the real brotherhood that existed. Visiting apostles and others would break bread with the ecclesia and preach (Acts 20:7ff). Hospitality would be given to visiting brethren. Apart from voluntary withdrawal for doctrinal reasons (Peter in Gal. 2:11ff) and

41. For example, Acts 16:7, where Paul and Barnabas, who had been sent out by the Spirit from Antioch are called Apostles. Cf. also I Cor. 14 where Paul speaks of the charismata and indicates that some but not all have this gift and hence not all are Apostles.

rulers in a congregation who had turned against the apostolic teaching (3 John), there appears to have been mutual recognition of each other as brethren in Christ and full mutual acceptance of the status of each local ecclesia. The only evidence of dominance of one ecclesia over others is the occasion of the reference of the question of circumcision of Gentile believers to the Elders and Apostles at Jerusalem for decision. Even in the case of doctrinal teaching, Paul who is a late-comer to the ranks and who had not personally received the Lord's instructions as the other Apostles had, is given no corrections or additions to his understanding of the Gospel by the "Pillars of the Church". Nevertheless, Paul does not hesitate to rebuke Peter over his Judaizing tendencies when this is necessary for the conservation of the freedom of the believers.

A further matter of importance in the life and service of the ecclesia is the disciplining of its members. Taken in its original and positive meaning this related to the training of its members in spiritual understanding and in the Christian way of living (no dichotomy is intended here). Within the koinonia, by the use of their charismata, the members were to exercise their diakonia to one another. Example, teaching and counseling and disciplining are all included in the life of the ecclesia. On the negative and commonly understood side, the idea of disciplining stands for the maintenance of standards of behaviour, the preservation of the apostolic doctrine from heresy and the dealing with recalcitrant members. Discipline is to be exercised for the

spiritual benefit of the ecclesia as a whole or one or more of the members of it. Its purpose is to restore the erring one(s) (Gal. 6:1f) and the responsibility for its exercise rests on the maturer members of the ecclesia, either individually, on a one to one basis (Matt. 18:15ff), as a group, or even the whole congregation. The form of the discipline is first counsel, then warning and finally the removal from fellowship at the Lord's table or the ecclesia (Rom. 16:17, I Cor. 5:1-13, 2 Thess. 3:6, I Tim. 6:5, 2 John 10). Of special concern were moral offences and the teaching of or the tolerance of false doctrines (Rev. 2 & 3) - the former because it discredited the ecclesia and therefore its Lord in the eyes of the world and the latter because it led away from the Grace of God.

In the matter of financial support of those members involved in full-time evangelistic work, there is some evidence of material support supplied by others (Phil. 4:15) and yet on other occasions the apostles and their helpers were self-employed (Acts 18:3f). Paul speaks of the right of those who preach the Gospel to also live by it (1 Cor. 9:13f, Gal. 6:6) on the analogy of the Old Testament dispensation for the support of the Levitical priesthood. As Israel was bound to the tithe for the support of the priesthood who served God in their place and ministered the things of God to them, so the New Israel had a responsibility of supporting those whom it had recognised and designated as 'full-time' ministers of the Gospel. In the application of this principle it may be noted that there were occasions when certain men were

supported materially to free them for their specific ministry and, on the example of Paul, there were many who supported themselves either as a matter of policy or of temporary expediency. Jesus sent the disciples out to preach, commanding them to make no material preparation for their future needs but to rely on the hospitality of those they visited as "the labourer is worthy of his hire" (Matt. 10:10). Liberality, motivated by loving concern is the expected response of the heart renewed by the grace of God. As the occasion warranted, it might be overflowing abundant (2 Cor. 8:1-3) yet it is never measured by amount but by what it represents (2 Cor. 8:12f, Mark 12:42ff) of one's possessions. Paul uses the example of the Manna in the desert to illustrate the principle that the needs of the day are all that should concern a man and that he is to trust God for his future needs as he shares the material burdens of others. The faith that bound the believer to his Lord and was his certainty for the future also motivated him to provide for the needs of others apart from his own family, - especially those fully engaged in evangelistic or teaching work.

The service rendered to the world by the ecclesia is firstly a manifestation of the new creation and secondly the witness and proclamation of the Gospel. Yet that is not all. In sending the disciples out to witness in Israel, Jesus also commanded that works of mercy be carried out - to heal the sick, cast out devils etc. In Acts 8:7 there is a record

of healing and exorcism carried out by Philip amongst the Samaritans. However there is very little information about this form of service to others than the brethren in the N.T. Yet the parable of the Good Samaritan sets the pattern for the believers to follow. It is essentially works of compassion and mercy, the relieving of need and suffering rather than the righting of evil injustices that are enjoined.

Summary

Traditionally, the ecclesia has been called, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic. At the Reformation, the notes or marks of a true ecclesia were added - the right preaching of the Word, the proper administration of the Sacraments, and the proper administration of discipline. Whilst there is historical justification and intrinsic merit in the use of these terms, the previous survey has shown that they fail to bring out all the essential characteristics of the ecclesia and the nature of its mission. The essential characteristics can be briefly summarised as follows:-

- (i) The ecclesia has the task of being the agent of God's mission to the world by proclamation, witness and service. It has been 'called' into being by God to achieve His purpose that all nations may come to a knowledge of His Grace and serve Him. It exists for this purpose.
- (ii) The ecclesia is a koinonia of the Spirit comprising those persons regenerated and indwelt by the Spirit of Christ. It is one in the sense that it is the Body of

Christ but it may exist in various places where there is one or more believers. The full nature of the ecclesia exists whether it be one or more persons.

- (iii) The ecclesia has an oikonomia - it is sent to the world with the Gospel and it lives in the world that it may discharge its oikonomia. (The title "Apostolic", though a technically correct description of the ecclesia has tended in modern usage to obscure the true function of the ecclesia - therefore it is better to speak of the oikonomia or stewardship entrusted to the ecclesia.)
- (iv) Within the koinonia, the charismata of the Spirit to every believer are to be exercised for mutual edification in love. Thus the members are enabled to grow up in the image of Christ and so fulfil their witness and service in the world.
- (v) Within the ecclesia, there is no hierarchy of rank or status but only a mutual recognition of and submission to the charismata of one another as they exercise their ministry. Some are given the charismata of teaching and leading. Such people were called presbuteroi or episkopoi and in a settled congregation as distinct from a newly started one, in which the apostle or evangelist may be present, there would be several such persons. Ministries may be filled on a full-time basis or as required. Establishment and continuity of any ministry does not depend on some formal ceremony of laying on of hands, although this

took place in many instances.

- (vi) Purity of living and purity of doctrine in accordance with the apostolic teaching are maintained by proper discipline.

Chapter 3

THE CHURCH IN HISTORY

Introduction

In the previous chapter it has been shown that there are certain characteristics of the ecclesia which are consistent and clearly discernible in both the old and the new People of God. Whilst the nature of the Divine Mission changed with Pentecost and a new dynamic was added to the life of the ecclesia to fit it for this work, features of internal structures and relationships continued essentially unchanged. In Chapter one it was asserted that these characteristics were part of the Divine Intention and that the effectiveness of the ecclesia in mission would only occur as they were manifested in its life. This assertion, if true, must have relevance for the current debate on the Mission of the Ecclesia and must be the criterion that is used to evaluate the present suggestions. It is now necessary to see whether the essential characteristics and understandings of the ecclesia developed in Chapter two are in fact present in the ecclesia at those times in history when it is generally agreed to have made an impact on the world. In particular we wish to examine whether there is a correlation between numerical growth rate and high degree of stewardship of time and money on the one hand and a concern to evangelise the world, to provide the kind of fellowship in which Christian maturity can occur and Christian service can originate on the other hand. To do this, an examination is made of certain

selected periods, including two current examples, of the life of the ecclesia. Lack of statistical evidence in many cases has meant that qualitative rather than quantitative assessments have had to be made. Some of the characteristics discussed in the previous chapter are not susceptible to empirical measurement and so their presence or absence has had to be inferred from other observations.

It is sometimes argued that times of numerical increase of the ecclesia and its rapid extension in a country are due to factors other than those suggested above. For example, E.R. Wickham in his book "Church and People in An Industrial City" examines the life of Sheffield from the mid-eighteenth century and concludes that the revivals of religion had to do very greatly with the social conditions of the times and the historical background of the denominations. Whilst not denying Divine influence he makes a plea for a greater consideration of the historical and sociological influences when examining the effectiveness of the ecclesia. Some sociologists of religion would go even further and insist that all such phenomena of renewal and revival could be explained in purely sociological terms.

No ecclesia exists independently of its social milieu nor is its nature independent of its own historical background. However this does not mean that its nature at any point in history is completely determined by these factors. Likewise, although the ecclesia, as a visible group of people may be described in sociological terms it does not follow that this is a complete description or that its functioning can be

predicted in terms of social theory. Sociologists of religion generally fail from methodological considerations to give adequate consideration to the "spiritual" facts as distinct from the social and historical facts and to take account of the Divine influence in the lives of individuals. For example, Wickham does not analyse the reasons for the situation in the denominations at the time (circa 1750) in terms of the biblical evidence concerning the ecclesia, nor does he consider under what conditions the first evangelical revival could have been contained within those denominations rather than resulting in new movements. The mid-eighteenth century revival influenced many denominations, but in the main only Methodism showed continuing vitality and effectiveness. For this study, the interest is not in the sociological conditions that may have exerted some influence on the revival, even if that could be demonstrated, but in what there was in Methodism that caused it to have a greater impact on the life of England than the other denominations. Here we have to speak in generalities for undoubtedly there were individual Anglican and Independent congregations that also had a vital and continuing impact on the community during the same period. Nevertheless there was something in its self-understanding and its structures and programs that differentiated Methodism from the other denominations and contributed to its influence in the country. It is this aspect of Methodism and other similar movements in history that will be documented briefly in the following pages.

The Church AD 60 to AD 300

Beginning with the ministry of John the Baptist, great numbers of the people of Israel evinced a repentance towards God and a desire to serve Him. Likewise, when Jesus sent the seventy to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick, they came back rejoicing at the success of their mission. On the day of Pentecost 3000 believed on the Lord and in the following days many more were added to the number of the disciples in Jerusalem (Acts 2:41, 4:4, 5:14, 6:7) and in the surrounding areas (Acts 8, 9:31, 11:21 & 24) and in more distant countries (Acts 14:1, 16:5, 17:4, 18:8). There was clearly a great turning to God firstly under the limited witness of John the Baptist and the disciples, and later, under their witness to the risen Lord. There was to be sure the matter of the Jewish persecution of the believers in Jerusalem which helped in the dispersion of the Gospel. No doubt also, the Pax Romana and the widely used Koine Greek language facilitated the movement of the believers and their witness. However, the N.T. bears witness to the work of the Holy Spirit of God who led and enabled the believers and thus made them effective instruments in the Missio Dei for their time. We may conclude that in the first twenty or thirty years after Pentecost the ecclesia was an effective instrument as, led and enabled by the Spirit, it was used for the conversion of thousands of people. God is not willing that any should perish (2 Pet. 3:9) nor will His Word return unto Him void (Is. 55:11) for He purposes that in the seed of Abraham all nation shall be blessed (Gen. 12:3, Gal. 3:16).

Until the time of the Constaninian decree which made Christianity the official religion of the Empire, the ecclesia suffered periods of active persecution combined with official proscription. In spite of being an illicit religion and subject to intense persecution at different times and different places, Christianity, which came into the Roman Empire about the same time as Mithraism, spread and in the end triumphed over the other faiths.¹ As early as about 120 AD it had spread as far as Bithynia and its attraction led Pliny to complain of the large numbers of Christians in that area who were to be found in all age groups and in all ranks of society. He was further dismayed by the deserted temples and the lack of interest in the State religion of emperor worship.²

By 150 AD Christianity had not only spread to all parts of the Roman empire but also to Africa and the eastern countries of Persia and Syria. Harnack³ estimated that by 150 AD there must have been more than 1 million converts to Christianity in the Empire. In spite of the Edict forbidding baptism (c 201 AD) the faith spread through the population and by 250 AD there were, according to Harnack, more than 30,000 Christians in the city of Rome alone and by the time

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1. Harnack, A. "Expansion of Christianity in The First Three Centuries" Vols. I & II, Williams & Norgate, London 1905. Duchesne, L. "Early History of The Christian Church", John Murray, London 1909. Lebreton, "The History of The Primitive Church" Vols. I to IV, Burns & Oates, London 1944.
 2. See Duchesne, Vol. I, p.78ff.
 3. Op.cit. Vol. III, p. 459.

of Constantine there were more than 6 million in the whole of the Empire.⁴ Workman⁵ puts the figures at 45,000 and 9 million respectively. The total population of the Empire at the latter time was estimated at about 60 million.

Regardless of which of the above is the correct figure it is clear that Christianity spread rapidly in the Empire and beyond it in spite of official restriction and persecution. Many thousands died for their faith by their refusal to acknowledge Caesar as a god. Many were exiled and deprived of their citizenship and other privileges. Catacombs became the only place where they could worship without molestation. Yet, in spite of these things the number of believers grew rapidly.

In attempting to assess why this growth took place under such unpropitious circumstances it is necessary to look in detail at life within the ecclesia. The evidence is limited largely to the writings of the Apologists but even so there is sufficient to indicate the essential characteristics of the fellowship. Lebreton⁶ points out that at least in the beginning, Christians participated in public life and service, including the army, and led a full life as citizens. They avoided however the Roman Spectacles and immodest displays. They were generous to the needy⁷ and avoided immorality and fornication. Although extra-marital sex was avoided, for

4. Ibid., p.435.

5. Workman, H.B. "Persecution In The Early Church" p.367, Kelly, London 1906.

6. Op.cit. Vol. II, p. 420ff.

7. Justin Martyr, 1st Apology.

a while at least more than one wife was permitted for the ordinary members of the ecclesia. Monogamy was however the rule for elders or bishops and only slowly did this become the rule for all members. Prayer, either privately or corporately, was the daily rule and most believers fasted twice a week. All met together regularly on the Lord's day for worship and celebration of the Lord's supper. Tertullian⁸ avers that the heathen exclaim "See how they (believers) love each other". Sharing of all things so that no one of the brotherhood lacked food or clothing or help of any kind was characteristic of the early believers. Martyrdom was an ever-present possibility and many of the brethren even appeared to welcome this possibility as a means of glorifying God.

To the outsiders, Duchesne comments, the Christians were attractive because of their brotherly love to one another and their strict morality in business and personal life. The Christian world view, developed from the O.T., which saw God as active in history working out His purposes contrasted favourably with the then current pessimistic philosophies and static world-views of the heathen religions. Coupled with this understanding of a gracious God who was working His purposes out in history, went a hope that put present sufferings in their correct perspective and triumphed over them. Harnack,⁹ commenting on the reason for the rapid spread of the

8. Tertullian, "Apologetics" 39:7.

9. Op.cit., Vol. II, p. 144ff.

faith, claims that its universalism also appealed to men in a class-distinguished society and offered hope to those who would almost certainly be denied it otherwise.

The early Christians demonstrated in the world the quality of the new life in Christ. The attractiveness of this witness drew many followers. Just as Israel, in its times of obedience, witnessed to the blessing of a life lived in obedience to God, so the ecclesia by its life proved a great attraction to the heathen by its quality of living and its peace and hope. As in the Acts of the Apostles no doubt the faith was communicated by preaching and verbal witness. Of specific evangelistic campaigns or missionary journeyings we have little detail but it seems reasonable to assume that each believer took opportunity to witness to his Lord and to persuade others to such a faith. Whilst there were undoubtedly sociological factors of life in the Empire that were propitious to the emergence of a universalistic religion, such as the increasing secularisation of life which cast doubt on the values of the old religions, the excesses of emperors which belied their claims to divinity etc., there can be no doubt that the spread of Christianity was primarily the work of God the Holy Spirit in and through the members of the ecclesia.

Methodism Until 1791

The period chosen for consideration runs from the time of the "conversion" experience of John Wesley in 1738, after he had been a missionary in the Eastern States of America for some years, until the time of his death in 1791. It has been

variously estimated that by his death there were 72,476 card holding members in the denomination (R. Currie),¹⁰ 76,000 (J.E. Orr),¹¹ and 80,000 (L.F. Church)¹². The number of adherents, that is, those not admitted by card to the love feasts, society meetings etc., is estimated by Orr to be about five times the number of members (this is based on the statistical information for the ratio in 1859/60) which gives about 380,000 persons. Church estimates the figure to be about 400,000. At a time when attendance at the established Church of England had dropped to a very low percentage of the population, this interest in spiritual things must be considered by any standard to be an effective missionary achievement. J.T. McNeil¹³ has pointed out that this growth took place at a time when there was a widespread rejection of Christianity in Britain, when freethinking was fashionable amongst the educated classes and when social evils were widespread in the land. Hobbes is quoted as saying that the life of the common man was "nasty, brutish and short". Corruption in politics was unrestrained and the law was harsh and arbitrary on the lower classes.

What happened at that time, and it must be remembered that the evangelical revival began some time before 1738 but gathered its main momentum with the work of Wesley and

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10. Currie, R. "Methodism Divided" p.26, Faber and Faber, London 1968.
 11. Orr, J.E. "The Second Evangelical Awakening in Britain" p.273ff, Morgan Marshall and Scott, London 1949.
 12. Church, L.F. "More About the Early Methodist People" p.290, Epworth, London 1949.
 13. McNeil, J.T. "Modern Missionary Movements" p.75ff, Harper, New York 1954.

Whitfield, must be described as a work begun and sustained by the Holy Spirit. Wesley was caught up and used in this work of the Spirit and as he records in his Journal, his concern was to be an effective instrument of the Spirit. Church¹⁴ relates how John Wesley studied all he could of writings on the life of the early church in order to guide the new movement. In particular, Dr. Cave's "Primitive Christianity" greatly influenced his thinking concerning the form of the ecclesia and his later formulation of "Rules" for the societies that he established.

Methodism developed under conditions of religious persecution and its followers could be arbitrarily punished or fined. Its meetings were often upset by mobs and its preachers stoned without hindrance from the police and on some occasions press-gangs were used to get rid of some of the local leaders.¹⁵ A few of the preachers and members suffered martyrdom for their faith. The clergy of the established Church, with the exception of the rapidly growing evangelical party of that church, despised the Methodists, as they came to be called, and refused cooperation, even though Wesley and his followers declared themselves to be good Anglicans and attended the Parish churches for communion (and usually made up the majority of the attenders). Against these difficulties the preaching of the Gospel by the Methodists bore much fruit, not only amongst the unlearned but also

14. Op.cit., p.156.

15. Church gives details in Chapter II of the difficulties and persecutions the early Methodists endured.

amongst the educated and the richer classes. Church¹⁶ relates how the London Society grew from 523 members in 1742 to 2392 in 1770 and to 2950 by 1791. Included in its members, as shown by the Class records, were army officers, professional men, physicians, as well as seamstresses and labourers. McNeil points out that the first response was usually amongst the lower classes because they were more easily available to the preachers than the upper classes who kept out of the taverns and common gathering places. Nevertheless many of the latter class, often with good classical education, were reached and became class leaders and local preachers. It is also clear from the class records that a real democratic spirit existed within the classes and the societies. The class leader may have been a farmer yet he was recognised as having a Divine gift for leadership and was accepted as such by all. Similarly, lay preachers and local preachers might come from any background, from yeoman to physician, from butcher to school teacher. Their acceptance by the society flowed from the recognition of their charismatic qualities.

For the guidance of the members of the societies, Wesley prepared his "Rules for the Society of People Called Methodists". The 1743 edition outlines the personal behaviour expected of members. Not only were honesty, morality, liberality, etc., enjoined but they were in fact the general rule of the members, even in the case of ex-criminals. This aspect of behaviour commended the Societies to the officials

16. Op.cit., p.5ff.

and the magistrates and won the interest and later the support of the educated people. Wesley emphasised that they were not only to refrain from doing evil but that they were also commanded to do good. Church¹⁷ comments that the early Methodists should be classified as philanthropists rather than social reformers - reform came from christians in other circles. It is known from his writings that Wesley opposed slavery and encouraged Wilberforce in his stand against it. It is clear from the records that the Methodists not only cared for their own members with loving concern and practical help, but that they also gave it to the needy in society. Prison and hospital visitation was started, a dispensary begun for the people and a "Strangers Friend Society" commenced. These are a few of the "good Works" begun by the Societies.

The other characteristic of Methodism, the pattern of which was established by Wesley, was the out-door preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the calling on men and women to repent and be converted. Although in the beginning open air preaching was forced on him by the hostility of the Established church clergy, Wesley soon recognised the advantages that it presented and used it as the main pattern of preaching. The origin of this effort to spread the Gospel was the experience of the Methodist preachers of the transforming power of the Holy Spirit in their own lives and the desire to be obedient to the command to preach the good news in all the world.

17. Op.cit., Chapter 5.

In the private and group life of the Methodists the Bible was the book that was studied and accepted as the Word of God to man and as the only and sufficient rule of faith and practice. Every member was expected to study the scriptures and become biblically knowledgeable as well as to attend on the preaching and expounding of the Scripture. It is clear, from the extant records (vide Church), that many became well learned in the scriptures and it was from such people that the lay preachers were drawn. Private, family and class prayer was both expected of every member and in fact the norm - indeed much time was given to prayer. Fasting or abstinence was also expected of the members - this was usually once a week for part of the day and normally consisted in refraining from the use of meat. Wesley preached daily at 5 a.m. without having had any refreshment and afterwards partook only of a cup of chocolate.

It was in the Societies and Classes which Wesley established all over the country that the members were nourished up in their faith and their understanding of the christian life developed. Here they learnt to grow in their love to God and to one another as members of His family. In Wesley's own words¹⁸ "it can scarce be conceived what advantages have been reaped from this little prudential regulation (The class meeting). Many now happily experienced that Christian fellowship of which they had not so much as an idea before. They began to bear one another's burdens and naturally to care for each other". In the fellowship of

18. Wesley, J. "Works" Vol. VIII, p. 254.

the class meeting, not only was christian understanding deepened and affection for one another developed, but it also became the group from which works of mercy and comfort to the needy originated. In the groups, mutual discipline was also practised. It was not a censorious discipline but one that came from those whose hearts were filled with the love of God, because they sought to serve and please Him, and which sought to help the offender.

The reality of the joy and peace in the lives of the early Methodists and the reality of their commitment to serve their Lord is exemplified in the account of the life of a Mrs. Richard Trewavas who gave for charity six times what she spent on clothes for herself each year¹⁹ and in the manner in which many of them faced persecution and bodily danger.

The rapid spread of Methodism was due to the fact that it was essentially a movement in which every member had a part. Whilst a great deal depended in the early days on the energy and ability of the Wesleys and a few other circuit preachers in keeping in touch with the many Societies and encouraging the people, it was mainly through the ability and the character of the class leaders and the lay preachers, and the spiritual standard of the members as a whole, that the movement spread throughout the country. Wesley introduced the concept of "holiness" of living and it was this insight that helped to lift the life of the fellowship to a level

19. Church, L.F. "The Early Methodists" p.199, Epworth 1948.

where it could be an effective means of God's grace to the world. The word Holiness may have an unfortunate connotation in the twentieth century, and it is clear from the records of the class meetings that we would probably use other terms today to describe this experience of unreserved commitment to serve the Lord Jesus Christ, nevertheless "holiness was not a theory to them but a way of life in which Christ was all in all".²⁰ It was nothing less than an inward transformation, operative in all areas of a man's life and enduring to the end of earthly existence, that enabled a man to overcome the temptation of sin and to glorify God in all that he did and said. It was this experience in the lives of the ordinary members that maintained the movement and drew others to it as they lived and proclaimed the Gospel.

The Salvation Army

As Methodism was both the product and the continuing stimulus of the first evangelical awakening in Great Britain, so the Salvation Army was the product and the means of the second evangelical awakening in Great Britain which began in the years 1859 to 1861. Booth, who had been accepted as a probationer minister with the Methodist New Connection in 1854, was engaged with his wife in evangelistic work in many areas in which revival took place.²¹ In 1861 Booth was invited to begin an evangelistic work in East London.

20. Ibid., p.140.

21. Orr, Op.cit., p.167.

Begun under the title of the "Christian Revival Association" this was changed in 1870 to "The Christian Mission" and later, in 1878, to "The Salvation Army".²²

From the beginning the movement was essentially an evangelistic one, calling on men and women to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour and serve Him in the world. Following Methodist patterns, new converts were appointed to small societies in order that they might be built up in the faith. As the committee that appointed Booth was an inter-denominational one so the work was conducted on a non-denominational basis. The Sacrament of baptism was dropped for the reasons that it would have been divisive in such a situation and on the theological ground that the Christian had the baptism of the Holy Spirit which was the only important thing. About 1882, the sacrament of Communion was dropped "on utilitarian grounds".²³ Whereas the Quakers had felt guided by inner revelation to drop the sacrament, William Booth, whilst recognising its value, felt that it raised too many problems of church membership and authorisation to administer it to warrant its retention.

With the growth of the work, the Army started on organised social work as distinct from personal Christian philanthropy. Work amongst ex-prisoners began in 1883 in Australia and women's social work was commenced in England

22. Booth, Bramwell, article on "Salvation Army" in Hastings Dictionary of Religion and Ethics, 1920 edition.

23. Ibid.

in 1884. With the publication of "In Darkest England and The Way Out" by William Booth in 1889 the future programme of the Army was decided. Booth's words in this connection are important - "the solution (to the moral and social problems of mankind) is insoluble unless it is possible to bring new moral life into the souls of these people. This should be the first object of every social reformer, whose work will only last if it is built on the solid foundation of a new birth".²⁴ He went on to say - "I must assert in the most unqualified way that it is primarily and mainly for the sake of saving the soul that I seek the salvation of the body. But what is the use of preaching the Gospel to men whose whole attention is concentrated upon a mad desperate struggle to keep alive . . . He will not listen to you. Nay he cannot hear you any more than the man whose head is under water can listen to a sermon" (p.45).

The growth rate of the Army is hard to assess for, unlike the Methodists, they seem never, at least in the early years, to have collected and issued membership statistics. Some indication of growth can however be obtained from the facts that beginning in London in 1865, it had spread to Wales in 1874, Scotland 1879, Ireland and the U.S.A. by 1880 and Australia and France by 1881. By 1968 it had 17,980 active officers in 71 countries and a further 36,124 full-time employees in its social institutions (Figures from the 1970 Year Book). Orr²⁵ characterises the work as a Home Mission

24. Booth, W. "In Darkest England and The Way Out", Knight, London 1970 reprint.

25. Op.cit., p. 264.

as distinct from one working in unevangelised areas and claims that the emergence of the Army represented not a split in denominational ranks but rather an interdenominational cooperation to do something for the "submerged tenth of Britain" as Booth called them.

As may be anticipated from Booth's background, the life expected of the members is very similar to that laid down by Wesley almost a century earlier. The life required of a Salvationist was set out in "Rules and Doctrine of the Christian Mission" in 1875 and in "Orders and Regulations for Divisional Officers" in 1885. Officers were expected to have experienced a definite conversion and to have given their lives for the service of Jesus Christ. They were also expected to demonstrate holiness in their lives and to show evidence of their dedication. Likewise, Soldiers were to be converted people, willing to serve God through the Army and leading their own family in the Christian life. Prayer and bible study were essential aspects of both the individual and corporate life of the members. All were required to attend the various meetings and participate in the services undertaken by the Army. Individuals were required to be regular in their own daily devotions and the head of the family was expected to gather the other members for prayer and instruction. They were to be generous in their financial giving (tithing was advocated) and active in witnessing to others of their faith in Jesus Christ. Although social work is centrally controlled in each country, members are nevertheless encouraged to give local service and help to the sick

and needy and to aid people in the care of their homes and families.

Like the early Methodists, the early Salvationists were persecuted and mobbed. Police tried to stop the street Gospel meetings, roughs sought to break up the gatherings and many members were injured or imprisoned. However, such was their witness in the character of their life and service that opposition was overcome and many opponents were won to the movement.

Pentecostalism In Chile

One of the current Christian denominations showing great virility and growth is Pentecostalism. Newly arrived on the world scene, it dates from about 1901, it now in its various sub-denominations numbers many millions. In the U.S.A. and parts of Scandinavia it has spread rapidly and its particular theological emphases are penetrating many of the older denominations. There is no adequate examination of the movement in the so-called Western Christianised nations although Bloch-Hoel²⁶ gives some idea of the movement in Scandinavia. Therefore our examination of the movement is based on the Chilean situation which has been well documented by Laline d'Epinay in "Haven of The Masses"²⁷ in which he deals with both the sociological as well as the theological aspects of the situation. (The author graduated in sociology and then theology at the University of Geneva). Although

26. Bloch-Hoel, N. "The Pentecostal Movement" Universitetsforlaget, Oslo 1964.

27. d'Epinay, C.L. "The Haven of The Masses", Lutterworth, London 1969.

the conditions of Chile are different from a sociological view, yet, like the West it represents what some have termed a "post-christian" situation. Thus, an understanding of the life and functioning of the movement has relevance for the West.

The main distinguishing feature of Pentecostalism, glossolalia, has been discussed by Stagg, Hinson and Oates²⁸ and others who have discounted much of the supernatural explanation claimed by Pentecostalists. However it is the nature of the fellowship and the effectiveness in mission that are our concern at this stage rather than an evaluation of its specific teachings.

Although there have been isolated occasions of glossolalia during the history of the ecclesia it was not until about 1901 that the present movement originated in the U.S.A. amongst members of the Holiness church which in turn had its roots in Methodism. In Chile²⁹ the movement originated with Dr. Hoover, a Methodist missionary who arrived in 1902 to take over the work in Valpariso. Spiritual renewal began in the congregation but it was not until 1907 that the doctrine of "a clear and distinct baptism of the Spirit, as a complement to justification and sanctification" was taught. This baptism was manifested by speaking in tongues. From that time on there was much seeking after the manifestation and the movement grew rapidly. Hoover was later expelled by the Methodists and set up, with

28. Stagg, F., Hinson, E.G. and Oates, W.E. "Glossolalia" Abingdon, Nashville, 1967.

29. Following d'Epinau, Op.cit.

others, the Iglesia Metodista Nacional in 1909. After this time there was rapid expansion and in spite of splits resulting in sub-denominations, the numbers of those holding to a pentecostalist view, (which includes glossolalia, Divine healing, prophecy etc.) had grown to something of the order of 350,000 by the end of 1960. d'Epinau details some of the problems of interpreting the statistical data for the country and claims the figures in the World Christian Handbook are grossly exaggerated. At the present time the numbers of protestants in Chile are doubling every 10 or 11 years and the great majority of them are pentecostalists.³⁰

Like Methodism and Salvationism, Pentecostalism is a conversionist denomination. Although it was stated at its origin in the U.S.A., and recently confirmed by one of its chief spokesmen D.J. duPlessis³¹ that glossolalia is a gift for Christians in all denominations, the movement soon took on a denominational aspect as the term is commonly used. Preaching is not limited to a clerical class but is done by most of the members. Only in recent years has the tendency to require seminary training as a prerequisite to preaching become apparent. One of the reasons for its rapid spread geographically is that it has not, in the past, been limited by manpower. Every member was expected to testify to his salvation and to proclaim the Gospel to neighbours and friends. Thus, when a family moved there was someone ready to preach to neighbours and to witness in that new town.

30. d'Epinau, op.cit., p.16 to 20.

31. du Plessis, D.J. "The Spirit Bade Me Go" Oakland, 1963.

d'Epina y comments on the social coherence of the believers - they become an extended-type family in which each is surrounded by spiritual brothers and sisters who accept him and share with him. There is a true equality within the local ecclesia and the dignity of each person is recognised in the common sonship to one Heavenly Father. This feeling is heightened as newcomers are assigned to Sunday School classes (for all ages) in which the instruction becomes a mutual affair as testimonies and experiences are shared. According to d'Epina y there is a high degree of integration into the groups at the cultural, communicative and behavioural levels. The individual thus finds acceptance and has a real sense of belonging to the group. Although stated in different terms, the situation is very similar to that of the older Methodist 'classes' to which it is historically linked.

The Pentecostal movement emphasises the importance of the Bible - the 1949 manifesto of the World Pentecostal Fellowships stated their "full acceptance of the Scriptures as our sole and final authority on all matters of faith and grace . . . and agreed to maintain the scriptural purity of the fellowship by bible study and prayer".³² In fact of course, there is also an unadmitted tradition of biblical interpretation that has to be accepted by the members in order that the distinctive pentecostal position be maintained. Whereas in early Methodism every believer who could read was expected and usually attained a high degree of comprehension

32. Quoted by Bloch-Hoel, p.93.

of the Scriptures, a questionnaire distributed to pentecostal pastors established the fact that only about 50% of them read their bibles daily.³³ Bloch-Hoel observes³⁴ that the experience of the baptism of the spirit is considered to guarantee a right understanding of spiritual truth, and this makes diligent searching of the scriptures less important. However, this has its dangers and d'Epina y points out that in some coal-mining areas in Chile, prophecy and tongues took precedence over the expounding of the scriptures. He adds that the groups had become "Stagnant and sinking into quietness, totally inward looking"³⁵. The growing tendency to insist on Bible-college training for the pastors means that this danger has been recognised and corrective action taken.

Prayer is a conspicuous part of pentecostal worship but of the individual's prayer life there is little information. Many tend to practice praying in tongues. In conversation, some Pentecostals have expressed the view that praying in tongues gives them assurance of the grace of God and others have said that it is the Spirit praying through them. Every Pentecostalist is expected to engage in evangelism and witness and the view is held that the baptism of the Spirit is essential for power in witnessing (Acts 1:8). Many workers are trained in street evangelism and pastors are not normally accepted until they have demonstrated their capacity in this regard.

33. d'Epina y, Op.cit., p. 192f.

34. Op.cit., p.97f.

35. Op.cit., p.54f.

d'Epina y comments that the local congregation is typical of the Chilean people as regards age and sex distribution. Bloch-Hoel records that in the U.S.A. men comprise about 52% of the total in the largest groups and up to 82% in the case of some of the smaller off-shoot groups. More than the older denominations, pentecostalism attracts and retains whole families. d'Epina y compares the extended family form with the old Chilean "hacendado" in which the workers on a big estate formed a big family that lived under the land owner who was their patron and protector.³⁶ Although this may explain in part the pattern of the congregation in Chile the explanation would not apply in Norway or the U.S.A. where pentecostalism has also gained a big following. It seems simpler to assume that this extended family relationship is the normal biblical pattern that occurs when people are wholly seeking to serve God as His children. In Chile, a nominally Roman Catholic country, riddled with superstition and having a ritualistic religious form which had little impact on the daily life of the people, the reality and warmth of the Christian experience as demonstrated in the lives of the Pentecostalists has attracted much interest and drawn many followers.

In regard to social action, d'Epina y states that beyond care for the members of the fellowship, Pentecostalists have shown little concern for union or political action and have not as a group sought to have injustices remedied - in short

36. Ibid., p.82f.

their concern has been for the souls of men rather than for their bodies. On the other hand d'Epinau points out that the change in the lives of the Pentecostals is such that employers are keen to take them on because of their sobriety and reliability. Thus an indirect influence is exerted in society.

Read³⁷ in tracing the growth of Pentecostalism in the country of Brazil concludes that its growth is due to the following factors:- a self supporting ministry, an insistence on responsible stewardship (e.g., tithing), the employment of every person in some form of service or ministry, the warmth and depth of the fellowship and the use of the Regulamento (standards of christian doctrine and practice). The same could be said of the situation in Chile.

The Interdenominational Evangelicals

This is not another distinct group or movement that can be easily delineated, for it represents a major and very active group existing within many of the present protestant denominations. Briefly, it comprises people within these denominations who hold to a conservative and orthodox understanding of the Christian faith and who have become involved in the support of some one or more missionary organisations outside their own denomination. The early inter-denominational missionary effort was spearheaded by people such as Hudson Taylor of the China Inland Mission and George Müller of Bristol.

37. Read, W.R. "New Patterns of Church Growth In Brazil" p.120ff, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1965.

These men and the thousands of men and women who have followed them have been supported prayerfully and financially by Christians who were also active supporters of their own denominational organisations. The numbers of interdenominational missionaries have increased greatly over the years. According to a survey carried out by the Evangelical Missionary Alliance,³⁸ out of a total of approximately 6000 protestant overseas missionaries from Great Britain about 2800 are supported by interdenominational societies. (The percentage is about the same in Australia and is a little higher in the U.S.A.) If it is borne in mind that each missionary requires on the average some 40 to 50 financial supporters, it can be seen that the number of people involved in Great Britain is of the order of at least 125,000. This estimate is probably a little on the low side but is sufficient to indicate the extent of the movement, and hence its importance in considering the ecclesia and mission.

The relationship of this group to the rest of the denominational membership needs to be clarified. Unfortunately there is no published definitive study of this group and therefore the following observations rest largely on personal contact and discussions. The people of this group are generally considered by their own denominations to be amongst the core of deeply committed people. They are generally office-bearers in their own congregations and involved in its teaching programs. Where there are congregational bible

38. Private correspondence from the Secretary of 14th July 1971.

studies and prayer meetings they constitute the bulk of attenders. Their stewardship of possessions is of a high order and their giving to the work of their own denomination is very generous. Over and above this service and giving they also contribute to the work of the inter-denominational missions. The reasons for this divided loyalty are partly historical, i.e. they stem from the rather late concern of the historic denominations to become seriously interested in foreign missions and from special interests that are not satisfied by their own denomination's mission activity such as medical work, technical assistance etc. A personal enquiry amongst Presbyterian, Baptist and Church of Christ congregations in Perth, Western Australia in 1967 revealed the fact that those congregations from which the greatest support came for the finances of interdenominational missions were also the congregations that contributed most to their own denominational missions (on a per capita basis) and in which the actual level of financial giving was extremely high. (The first two observations are confirmed in a study made by the Evangelical Missionary Alliance in Great Britain in 1969/70 of a sample of congregations.)³⁹ The numbers involved may range from only a few in a particular congregation to a considerable percentage in the case of those congregations where there is official support for interdenominational missions.

The group would emphasise a conversion or commitment

39. Ascot Surveys, "Report Of The Church Leaders Survey 1969/70" Evangelical Missionary Alliance, London 1970.

experience which may be related to baptism or confirmation within the local congregation or, outwith the congregational activities such as in homes or at evangelistic rallies. Generally the interest is shared by the whole family even though it may have initially been the concern of only one member. Personal daily prayer and bible study are the rule, as well as family devotions in which all members share. The older members of the family would teach in the congregational youth program and take part in other congregational outreach and social work. Being committed to the view that God calls all men to repent and believe on His Son, they are active in evangelistic outreach both organised and informal. They make up the bulk of the members of the Christian Unions in colleges and factories and offices in Great Britain and Australia.

The composition of the group as a whole tends to be representative of the general population, with the exception of the unskilled workers. Generally, both sexes are equally represented and there is a large number of young people. Special sub-groups catering for the interests and enthusiasms of young people are undoubtedly part of the reason for this situation, but the involvement of families as a whole also helps to explain the phenomenon. In the mission organisations there is less distinction between lay and clerical members as compared to the average congregation and leadership is given by the most suitable person, lay or clerical. Generally, those people holding positions of responsibility and authority in business or industry tend to fill the executive positions and to provide the leadership.

To train their missionaries, the group has set up Bible Colleges and Institutes in which people without tertiary or matriculation qualifications can be given one two or three years of full-time training in biblical studies and practical Christian work. This training is in addition to any specialist training which the candidate may have had (e.g. nursing). The candidate may then be sent out to work as technical or theological worker. A wide range of specialist and technical missions are supported, including leprosy, translation, literacy and ecclesia support programs.

Summary

In this chapter brief descriptions have been given of the ecclesia in certain periods of history and some present situations where it has displayed great vitality and has extended its influence widely. Although many of the great advances of the ecclesia in the world (e.g. in Africa) have been omitted nevertheless a striking similarity of characteristics have been shown to be common to all. These can be summarised as follows.

The first characteristic is that of the quality of the life of the individual Christians. They display in word, action and attitude a difference from those around them that is both noticeable and attractive. They are literally new creatures in Christ - old moral standards are replaced, violence and brutality have given way to gentleness and thoughtfulness, fear and superstition to inward peace and joy. They have courage to face persecution and death if needs

be and a willingness to share their goods and to help others in need around them. They have a sure hope in God and of His power to bring all things to His conclusion.

The second characteristic is the burning desire to share this experience and this knowledge with others by witnessing to the Lord Jesus Christ and seeking to persuade all men to repent. The proclamation of the Gospel is their primary concern. This is firstly verbal but supported by their practical works of mercy and love.

The third characteristic is the place which prayer and bible study play in the personal and corporate life. The Bible is the basis of God's revelation to man and prayer is man's primary means of fellowship with Him. Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for study "so that the man of God might be thoroughly furnished unto all good works". (2 Tim. 3:16f).

The fourth characteristic is the nature of the fellowship which the believers enjoy. It is an accepting and a caring group in which honesty, openness and love facilitate the mutual upbuilding of christian maturity and understanding. The use of a "rule of faith and life" (in some of the groups) provided immediate guidance and help to the new members until, in the fellowship and the service of God, they have had time to test the rule in daily living and so to accept it as their own understanding of the life and faith of a Christian.

The fifth characteristic is the ministry of the whole ecclesia in which all participate. Whilst some exercise oversight of the group, all members are expected to witness

and teach and serve. The mutual acceptance and submission to the charismata of the various members is more or less accepted practice. All share in the work of the ecclesia in the world rather than a few specially trained persons. The expansion of the ecclesia is the result of the witness and service of all the members as they go about their family life, their employment or association with friends. A high level of stewardship, coupled with an every member ministry ensures that work is well supported as regards funds and personnel.

Chapter 4

SOME CURRENT VIEWS OF THE CHURCH AND HER MISSION

Introduction

In Chapter two some of the Biblical descriptions of the people of God were examined to show both the continuity of the Old and the New Israel and also the discontinuity of the work of the Holy Spirit as far as the constitution of both groups was concerned. It was shown that the people of God do not exist simply to enjoy the Divine blessings but rather to fulfil the Divine purpose, that in Christ the seed of Abraham, all men should turn to God, - that they should turn from the distortion of manhood that is the consequence of sin and participate in the new humanity that is in Christ. In this chapter some of the current analyses of the nature and Mission of the Church and the proposals for her future structures are considered in the light of the earlier evidence.

Considerations of space have made it necessary to restrict the analysis of writings on the Church and Mission to those that have appeared in the main during the last ten years. This is not in fact a very severe restriction as most of these writings reflect in themselves the gains of many previous years of wrestling with the problem, as well as critical reflection on these ideas. The review is also limited to those writings dealing with the essential nature and mission of the ecclesia, rather those dealing with liturgical renewal and participation in world development (SODEPAX) etc. Finally, the review has been limited to

those forms of the ecclesia that are represented in the main by the protestant denominations of the western tradition. It is not possible to consider, in this limited essay, all the developments of form and service that are manifested in Africa, Asia etc., valuable as they are to a proper understanding of the ecclesia. Nevertheless many of the principles discussed herein will be applicable to these 'newer' ecclesia, if not immediately, then in the future as they in turn approach a post-christendom situation.

The Nature of the Ecclesia

As the nature of the ecclesia is prior to its mission, it is convenient to begin this section with consideration of some of the documents of the World Council of Churches that deal with the Ecclesia. Section I of the 1968 Uppsala Report¹ dealing with the 'Holy Spirit and the Catholicity of the Church' affirmed the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing the ecclesia into being as the promise and first-fruits of the New Creation. It described the ecclesia as the community of sinful men who have been brought "through repentance and baptism into the universal fellowship of the forgiven". The original draft² for this section of the report omitted the words repentance and baptism and spoke of the sovereignty of the Spirit to work outside the ecclesia if He chose. The change in wording of the final draft reflects the unresolved tension, that existed at Uppsala and in the minds of many

1. "Uppsala Speaks", p.12f. Report of 1968 Assembly of World Council of Churches, W.C.C., Geneva 1968.

2. "Drafts for Sections" - Uppsala '68", p.9. W.C.C., Geneva 1968.

writers today, of the relationship of the ecclesia and the world. This question has become increasingly acute as the denominations have sought to face up to the growing secularisation of life and the problem of interpreting the Gospel to modern man in meaningful terms. Underlying these difficulties, and basically the cause of them, is the theological question of the nature of the redemption wrought in Christ by God the Father. This is illustrated in the writings of J.G. Davies³ who was also a participant in the W.C.C. Committee that produced the report "The Church for Others" which influenced much of the Uppsala thinking. In discussing the place of baptism in relation to worship and mission, he states:- "God calls some to participate in His mission for all mankind. Hence baptism does not separate men from the world; it is a declaration that God wants all men to come to the knowledge of the truth through the direct participation of some men in mission"⁴ (Emphasis mine). Mission therefore becomes the question of a priesthood operating on behalf of the world - as Christ was the great high priest on behalf of the world so the baptised offer to God the institutions of the world and thereby hallow them. By their mission the baptised enable "natural life to be its true self as communion with God" so that men may be fully human. The consequence of this view is that it disavows any discontinuity between the ecclesia and the world other than that

3. Davies, J.G. "Worship and Mission" S.C.M., London 1966.

4. Ibid., p.90f.

of the small group who worship on behalf of the rest and who know the reality of things. In the document "The Church for Others"⁵ it is questioned whether God intends to relate all men to himself through the ecclesia and hence whether it is necessary to conceive of mission as being the gathering in of as many men as possible from the world. McBrien⁶ specifically denies that God intends to bring as many as possible into the ecclesia and speaks of the ecclesia as the elect of God who are to worship and serve on behalf of the world as did Israel in the Old Testament.

Whilst the Committee of the W.C.C. that prepared the report "The Church For Others" specifically disavowed any intention to develop a comprehensive ecclesiology⁷ nevertheless they proceeded on the basis that the church/world relationship mentioned above was a valid one theologically. They assumed that in Christ the whole world including mankind was redeemed (that is, every man) and that it was the mission of the ecclesia to proclaim this fact to the world and demonstrate the nature of the new humanity in its own fellowship whilst at the same time displaying the character of a servant in the world as did her master. On this view, God is at work outside as well as inside the ecclesia. Wherever wrongs are being righted, injustices are being removed and opportunities for human development are being stimulated, God is at work there and calls his people to follow him in this work. In

5. "The Church For Others" p.16f, W.C.C. Report, Geneva 1967.

6. McBrien, R.P. "Do We Need The Church", p.189f. Collins, London 1969.

7. See article by J. Morikawa in "Concept" No.12, December 1966.

the "Drafts for Sections" it is stated that the Spirit is at work in every dialogue with men of other and no faiths and that "at any time or place within the dialogue moments for proclamation of the Gospel may be given".⁸ The Church for Others report stated that "the church must be understood in its world relation as an expression of God's will that all men be saved. This affirms its existence for all men (pro-existence). In terms of God's concern for the world, the church is a segment of the world, a postscript added to the world for the purpose of pointing to and celebrating both Christ's presence and God's ultimate redemption for the whole World". The postscript nature of the church is then shown by the diagram God → World → Church, which has to be substituted, according to the Report, for the conventional diagram God → Church → World.

The above view of the ecclesia and its mission has not gone unchallenged. It is rejected in the Vatican II Schema "Lumen Gentium"⁹ wherein it is reiterated (section 14) that the ecclesia is necessary for salvation, that (section 8) Christ communicates grace and truth through the Ecclesia and leads men to the ecclesia in order to join them with himself (section 48). H. Küng who is a Roman Catholic also denies the ex-centric position of the ecclesia to the world and insists on it as the means of grace to the world.¹⁰

8. Op.cit., p.41.

9. The Decree "Lumen Gentium" in "The Documents of Vatican II" Abbott, W.M. (Ed.) p.14ff. Chapman, London 1967.

10. Küng, H. "The Church", Burns and Oates, London 1968. Küng speaks, p.52f, of the world and God as mutually exclusive. At pp.114ff he shows that the Church exists in its own right and not as an appendix to the world.

On the Lutheran side the view was strongly attacked by W. Krusche¹¹ on the grounds that this ex-centric view of the ecclesia does not take seriously enough the N.T. witness concerning the judgement of the world. It results in the conclusion that every man is already part of the new creation and that all that is required of him is knowledge of the fact rather than repentance and turning to God. The same concern for faith and commitment was echoed in Section 2 of the final report from Uppsala¹² dealing with the mission of the ecclesia and motivated the change of the wording of the draft report of Section I on "The Holy Spirit and the Catholicity of the Church from "the Spirit continually bearing witness to the Church of the truth of the Gospel"¹³ to read in the final report that the Holy Spirit "bears witness through the Church to the truth of the Gospel and makes it credible to men".¹⁴ (Even this change was not enough for some delegates and the debate continues through W.C.C. publications.)¹⁵

The understanding of the relation between the ecclesia and the world depends both on the understanding of the nature of the ecclesia and of the nature of the world. One group of writers would restrict themselves to the evidence of the

11. Krusche, W. in "Sources For Change", Neve, H.T. (Ed.) p.82ff, W.C.C., Geneva 1968.

12. Op.cit., p.22f.

13. Op.cit., p.9.

14. Op.cit., p.13.

15. See "What Unity Implies - Six Studies After Uppsala", L. Newbiggin's essay, p.115ff. W.C.C., Geneva 1969. "Secular Man and Modern Mission" Loeffler, P. (Ed.) W.C.C., Geneva 1968. Chapter five summarises and contrasts the views. International Review of Missions, Jan. 1971 is devoted to this subject.

Old and New Testaments and, through reflection on the evidence presented therein, would hold that these principles have abiding authority even for those who are many generations removed from the apostolic times. (This does not mean rigidity of pattern, but only of relationships and requirements.) This pattern of interpretation is seen most clearly in the Radical Reformers and their spiritual descendants - The Open Brethren and Baptists. A second group includes those who would add to the Scriptural evidence the traditions of the ecclesia based on the deliberations of the Fathers as they faced doctrinal and political crises. This pattern is seen most clearly in Orthodox and Roman Catholic ecclesiology but is reflected to a considerable degree in the Anglican and to a much lesser degree in the Lutheran and Reformed ecclesiologies. This group would affirm that the scriptural evidence is incomplete and that God as the God of history will unfold more light as time goes by. This view is usually implicit in much of the recent writings but is made most explicit in the Schema of Vatican II dealing with the Petrine office¹⁶ in which it is affirmed that the Vicar of Christ is led into new understandings of the latent truths of Scripture. This group would be guided by the scriptures in basic doctrinal matters, but would allow their thinking concerning the structure of the ecclesia to be conditioned by the ecclesiastical and political events of the past. The ideas of Christendom, an ordered ministry, a State Church, have followed logically

16. "The Vatican II Documents" p.48ff and p.116f, op.cit.

from this approach and are seen in Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican and Reformed denominations. The Reformation had to do principally with the matters of authority and of grace versus works; there was no radical reconsideration of the form of the ecclesia apart from the question of personal versus corporate episcopacy. A third group root their conception of the form of the ecclesia in sociological theory and of the purpose of the ecclesia in an 'incarnational' theology which emphasise the servant motif. In Christ, God has shown Himself to be for man, in that He has identified Himself with their needs in the world and took the form of a servant for their sakes. Therefore, as Jesus was the man for others, so the ecclesia is to be the 'Church for others', - a suffering servant group in the world bringing the Shalom of God to the world. The actual form that the ecclesia should take at any time is determined by sociological considerations of the society in which it exists. This view, which finds some assent within most denominations, is most clearly expressed in the writings of Cox,¹⁷ McClelland¹⁸ and Winter.¹⁹

The above typology is only one of several by which views about the life and structures of the ecclesia can be described. Within each group there are wide variations and some of the elements appear in more than one of the groups. von Gessau²⁰

17. Cox, H. "The Secular City" Chapter VI. Macmillan, New York 1965.

18. McClelland, J.C. "Toward a Radical Church" p.58ff, Ryerson, Toronto 1967.

19. Winter, G. "New Creation As Metropolis" Chapters I & II. Macmillan, New York 1963.

20. Bright, L. & Clements, S. (Eds.) "The Committed Church" p.280ff. Darton, Longman and Todd, London 1966.

for example, uses a completely different form of classification. The classification used was chosen in order to highlight the factors that now seem to be fundamental to the determination of the true nature and mission of the ecclesia. These are firstly the proper understanding of the biblical testimony about the ecclesia the world and salvation, secondly the question of the finality of the biblical revelation and its completeness, thirdly the question of the legitimacy or necessity of adaptation to meet changing conditions such as secularisation, and fourthly the question of the relevance or otherwise of sociological data. There is not only a problem of how each factor is to be interpreted but also how they are to be related to one another and which if any exerts overriding authority. It is clear for example that the first group would rate the first and second factors as determinative. The New Testament pattern is to be followed and the ecclesia is always to be seen as over against the world and not as part of it or determined by it in any way. Any variation in pattern would be due to varying interpretations of the New Testament evidence. The second group would place importance on the third factor whilst also claiming to properly interpret the New Testament evidence. The third group would claim to be guided by the first factor but would insist that it has to be modified in the light of the fourth factor, and would in fact feel free to use any pattern that seemed relevant to them. (This latter approach is displayed by McClelland in his search for a "radical" church.)

For all groups the matter of the interpretation of the

biblical evidence and the questions of the sufficiency and finality of that evidence are of primary importance. Those who seek to use additional information have already passed their judgement on the scriptures as being either insufficient or time conditioned. It is this problem of the place and interpretation of the scriptures that is the key to the modern differences of view, even if it is rarely mentioned. In his criticism of "The Church For Others" report, Krusche²¹ pointed out that the Scriptural evidence indicated that proclamation of the Word was prior in principle to the service of the world and that salvation could not "be shoved into second place in favour of a theme of world formation". The ecclesia has the task of "reconciliation through the Word" (2 Cor. 5:18f). The establishing of Shalom, which the Report stated to be the purpose of the ecclesia,²² was not realisable apart from salvation. Krusche has clearly limited himself to the biblical data and distinguished between Salvation and Shalom, whereas the Report committee felt themselves free to identify the two concepts and to be guided by sociological considerations. In the matter of specifying the work of the Spirit in the life of the ecclesia the same problem exists as to whether the Scriptures are the only and authoritative source of our knowledge, or whether some extra-biblical concepts can be introduced. Even when this question has been decided there still remains the question as to how the Scriptures are to be interpreted. Until such questions are decided the conflict

21. Op.cit., p.85f.

22. "The Church For Others" p.14f. op.cit.

of views on the nature and mission of the ecclesia will remain.

Fortunately the recent work in biblical studies in the N.T. on questions of ministry and mission is bringing a closer agreement between a wide range of scholars in the different denominational traditions. Küng²³ and Hanson²⁴ are two examples of the recent approach to the understanding of the nature and purpose of the ecclesia which come much closer to the "free church" views than those of previous scholars of these two traditions. Both draw conclusions as to the structure of the N.T. ecclesia that find wide assent in all the denominations. Unfortunately when they leave the biblical aspects behind and try and apply their findings to the present day situation they both evidence the conditioning of their denominational traditions.

In view of the different suggestions as to how the ecclesia of today should be structured is there any hope of resolving the views or must we seek something completely different from previous forms? T.F. O'Meara and D.M. Wiesser²⁵ claim that man must do theology, - that thinking must take place in action (praxis) and that as man works toward the future so the understanding of the Gospel and the forms in which it is to be presented will become clear. In other words, rather than determining in advance the form that the structures must take, we will be led to these as we seek to

23. Op.cit.

24. Hanson, A.T. "The Pioneer Ministry". S.C.M., London 1961.

25. O'Meara, T.F. and Wiesser, D.M. "Projections - Shaping an American Theology For The Future" p.217ff.
Doubleday, New York 1970.

present the Gospel. This attitude could lead to a bewildering multiplicity of approaches which would tend to bog down in subjectivism in the absence of any criteria concerning the life and mission of the ecclesia. As indicated in the first chapter, regardless of which view is taken of the nature and life of the ecclesia, some objective means of assessment are required in order to rescue the whole effort from purely subjective evaluation. An example of this type of thinking is seen in the Church of Scotland's Special Commission's Report on "Priorities of Mission in the 1970's." Para 104 states:- "---in the end it may be only in the dismantling of the socio-political structures of courts and committees and in the forgetting of strategy that the servant ministry will be fulfilled by those churchmen who go down among the secular groupings and spontaneously reveal how the Christian can withstand change where it is not merely anarchic or disruptive or can celebrate the experience of change not in fear but in faith and hope and love". No guidance is given as to how this is to be done or as to how it is to be recognised as specifically a Christian stand as distinct from some humanistic one. In fact, of course, statements of this kind imply a particular if unstated view of the ecclesia and these must now be examined.

The view of the nature of the ecclesia in recent writing tends to fall into one of the three following classifications. The first sees the ecclesia as a temporary means to an end and having no abiding significance in itself. Hoekendijk²⁶

26. Hoekendijk, J.C. "The Church Inside Out" p.40. S.C.M., London 1966.

says that the church "happens insofar as it actually proclaims the Kingdom to the World. The church has no other existence than 'in actu Christi', that is 'in actu Apostoli'. "The Church can exist only to the extent that it is the mission."²⁷ The second classification is seen in "Lumen Gentium"²⁸ in which the ecclesia is claimed to have an abiding reality into which Christ seeks to draw all men. Admittedly the Decree on mission qualifies this viewpoint to the extent that the possibility of salvation outside the one holy catholic and apostolic church is admitted.²⁹ However the idea is generally retained that the church is an ark of salvation of which the vicar of Christ is the visible head. The third classification mediates between the first two and sees the ecclesia as a community existing in the Spirit under the head-ship of Christ. In this view, community is the primary experience and witness or mission is secondary. This view is held in varying degrees by such a diverse group as the Orthodox, Quakers, Pentecostal and the recent pan-denominational (not evangelical interdenominational groups mentioned in Chapter 3), informal gatherings such as the underground "churches" of the U.S.A. N. Zernov³⁰ describes the Orthodox view of the ecclesia as "neither the local congregation, nor the God-established institution which controls his faith and provides him with the means of salvation. The church to him (the Orthodox

27. Quoted from Elert, W. "Das Christliche Ethos" p.555. 1949.

28. Op.cit., p.15ff, p.593.

29. Decree on "Unitas Redintegratio" in "The Documents of Vatican II" p.341ff, Op.cit.

30. Zernov, N. "The Church of the Eastern Christians" p.63f. S.P.C.K., London 1942.

believer) is the Divine grace revealed in the life of creation - it is the power that attunes men to God's will and makes them capable of obeying their Creator. - on the one hand the Church is given by God; she is cosmic, objective, beyond the control of her members, on the other hand she plays a most intimate part in their lives and her voice is heard in the depths of their own consciences". Here it is a form of mystical community that seems to be important. The description of the informal meetings of the so-called "Underground Church" in the U.S.A.³¹ also brings out the factor of community. The following extracts reveal something of the nature of this experience - "The Church to me is small groups of intimate friends getting together, having supper and just being there a while with each other. At least this is real and helps us all." (L. Zimmer, p.24). "The key to the understanding of these groups is fellowship" (J.P. Brown, p.47).

The consequences of these views of the nature of the ecclesia for the understanding of mission can be easily deduced. The first view sees the ecclesia as a sort of parenthesis between God and the achievement of His aim in the world, which is the establishment of Shalom. It is the world therefore that sets the agenda and the function of the ecclesia is to discern this task and follow where Christ is already at work in the structures of the world. This viewpoint is clearly expressed in the W.C.C. report "The Church for Others" in

31. Boyd, M. (Ed.) "The Underground Church". Sheed and Ward, London 1969.

which it is stated that "the world as the arena of God's action becomes the locus of theology" and the ecclesia is that part of the world "which find it's raison d'etre in the other parts and which lives for service to the rest of the world."³² In the report "Priorities for Mission in the 1970's" the view is expressed that "people cannot be reached and changed unless the Church aims to transform and humanise the entire community. This involves it with the structures of society as well as the men and women who live and work in them".³³ This view leads logically to the concept of a Theology of Politics as propounded by H. Cox (Projections p.4lff), in which self-revelation and social revolution become the dominant factors in man's world-view and the criterion of religious survival is whether it contributes to man's plumbing of his inner experiences and to the fashioning of a more just social order.³⁴ R. Shaul, in the same volume³⁵ suggests that this view leads to a Theology of Revolution to deal with the increasing secularisation of society. Based on a biblical understanding culled from the on-going experience of God that Israel received, Shaul suggests that our current theological crisis will only be passed as "we break out of the order of social repression and personal repression of which we are the victims and move expectantly toward a new land of promise,

32. Op.cit., p.92.

33. "Reports to Assembly 1971", para 102 of the report "Priorities For Mission in the 1970's". Church of Scotland, Edinburgh.

34. "Projections - Shaping an American Theology For The Future" p.4lff, op.cit.

35. Ibid., p.63ff.

toward the creation of a new order of social and personal existence. -- this theology will not be primarily a systematic affirmation of the sovereignty of God but rather an affirmation of life for man, of the possibility open to him individually and collectively in his struggle for liberation from present forms of oppression". Neither Cox or Shaul exclude the change of the individual, but they appear to view it as a consequence of social change rather than an independent work of conversion.

In the second view, the ecclesia is central and hence mission consists in making every effort to draw as many men as possible into it. From this understanding emerged the medieval concept of "Christendom" in which every person in the country was counted, through infant baptism, to be members of the ecclesia. It is essentially the outlook of the older denominations - every effort is to be made to draw people into the ecclesia for outside of it there is no salvation. The recent modification of the stand of the Roman Catholic denomination concerning salvation outside of that denomination is only a modification of the view of the boundary of the ecclesia rather than of the basic premise. Whilst all the denominations have in fact sought to serve the world through medical, educational and social work, the question of individual salvation through faith and incorporation within the denomination has taken precedence over works of mercy and service in the world. The world was something apart from the ecclesia with its own standards, from which men were to be rescued.

The third view of the ecclesia tends to place more importance on the form of the community and to see it as a place of personal satisfaction and fulfilment. This is most noticeable in the description of the "Underground Church" wherein it is claimed that the reality of the Christian life was to be found in the gatherings. Proselytising seemed to be a remote concept and the world was regarded in a neutral fashion. The community was the base from which to work on various projects of help and the righting of injustice but also the place to escape to in order to find fellowship. Under the pattern of the liturgy, the Orthodox member is expected to find this sense of belonging-in this case with the Divine rather than the human.³⁶

As with all attempts to systematise and codify the various conceptions of the ecclesia, the above scheme grossly oversimplifies the situation and tends to equate groups that are distinct in many ways. Its sole justification is that it brings out, almost in over-relief, three basic understandings of the nature of the ecclesia that find expression in current writings. From the study of the Biblical evidence in the second chapter it can be readily seen that all three aspects - service to the world, separation from the world and community are part of the ecclesia. The problem has always been to hold the three in proper balance. There are signs that the present questioning of the nature and the role of the ecclesia may lead again to a proper balance of the three elements.

36. Zernov, p.25ff, op.cit.

It seems to be increasingly acknowledged, apart from a small but vocal group of North American and West European writers, that the Ecclesia is in its essential nature a Spirit-gathered community in which the members minister to one another in love, separated from the standards and values of the world but existing to serve the world by participating in the *Missio Dei*.

The old description of the ecclesia as "holy, Catholic and Apostolic" fails, in the modern understanding of the terms, to bring out the real nature of the ecclesia. Likewise, the Reformation definitions of the 'marks of the Church' also fail to bring out the essential characteristics and to remind members both of their privileges as well as their responsibilities. The inadequacy of the old description is shown by Nissiotis's lengthy discussion³⁷ on the Catholicity of the Church. The Reformation 'marks' fail because of the use of such imprecise terms as "Right administration of the Sacraments" "proper discipline" etc. Both sets of terms had historical justification but they were in effect answers to the problems of the time. Today men are asking different questions and their different understanding of society requires that the description be meaningful in present day terms. The intention of the C.O.C.U. plan for the 'Church of Christ Uniting' in North America³⁸ to describe the ecclesia as "catholic, evangelical and reformed" is hardly an improvement on the older descriptions.

37. "What Unity Implies ---" p.9ff, op.cit.

38. "A Plan Of Union", Consultation on Church Union (COCU), Princeton 1970.

The Mission of the Ecclesia

The diversity of views concerning the nature of the ecclesia has led to an equal diversity of views concerning its functions and the way in which it is to discharge those functions. Section II of the Uppsala 1968 report speaks of mission as "the invitation to men to grow up into their full humanity in the new man Christ Jesus" and of the part Christians have to play in evangelism "as bringing about the occasions for men's response to Jesus Christ". This response brings about new life which "frees men for community, enabling them to break through the racial, religious and other barriers that divide mankind". "In a world where the whole of mankind is struggling to realise its common humanity, facing common despairs and sharing common hopes, the Christian church must identify itself with the whole community in expressing its ministry of service and witness and in a responsible stewardship of its total resources".³⁹ The Secretary of this section, Dr. A. Sovik, commenting on the report⁴⁰ pointed out that the discussion as well as the report itself reflect the diversity of views that are current regarding the nature of Christian mission.

The views of those who espouse the idea that mission is discovering God's action in the world and serving Him there are well presented in the report "The Church for Others", which deals with the problem of finding suitable structures

39. Op.cit., p.28ff.

40. Op.cit., p.36ff.

for mission in local congregations. The Western European Working Group stated in the report "that the Church lives in order that the world may recognise its true nature. Hence the Church's most important duty is to be present in the world in the knowledge that any loss of contact with it is disobedience to God's will for the world and leads to the destruction of the Church itself".⁴¹ The Group go on to speak of mission as the participation in the work of God in bringing about the establishment of Shalom in the world and the realisation of the full potentialities of the whole of creation. The ecclesia is to recognise where God is at work and to be involved with Him at these points. It has to recognise itself as a pilgrim people who must adopt the pattern of the messianic life - the form of a servant - and give up ideas of proselyting and aggrandisement in terms of numbers and activities in confident hope that the people will find new, perhaps unprecedented, forms to express their obedience to God.⁴² They envisage that new ad-hoc groups of Christians with no normal channels of communication with other Christian bodies may become necessary in order to participate in the *Missio Dei*. Worship is seen by the Group as that part of mission in which the local congregation acts on behalf of the world (as a first fruits); as serving as the instrument by which the aspiration, joys, uncertainties of the world are offered to God. Davies⁴³ speaks of the function of the

41. Op.cit., p.12.

42. Op.cit., p.19.

43. Chapter 4, Op.cit.

ecclesia as acting for the world and also on behalf of it. McBrien⁴⁴ also speaks of the priestly function of the ecclesia on behalf of the world but he bases this view on a concept of the ecclesia as being the elect of God in the world, rather than on a concept of the ecclesia serving the world by participation in changing the structures of the world.

In the same document, the North American Working Group speaks of clues for identifying the ecclesia in mission.⁴⁵ The first clue is the willingness of the ecclesia to change its structures and adopt new ones as a sign that God is bringing about a redemptive change in the world. The second clue is that of a "transparency" of life which will enable its celebration and suffering to be visible to the world - by what it is and what it does the ecclesia proclaims the gospel. The third clue is that the structures of the ecclesia must evidence hope in the fulfilment of the goal of mission - they must recognise their weakness and powerlessness but nevertheless must hope in the power of God and His Spirit. The fourth clue is that the ecclesia must exercise a corporate ministry i.e., it must be a diakonia of the whole laos. The fifth clue is that the ecclesia must serve in the interest of the humanisation of society and thereby celebrate Christ's victory over the dehumanising powers of the world. The sixth clue is that the ecclesia must exhibit a plurality of forms that are adapted to modern society rather than seek to impose a single traditional pattern. The Group

44. Op.cit., p.97f.

45. Op.cit., p.69f.

went on to illustrate these clues by examples of the involvement of congregations in public education policy making, metropolitan urban service training, civil rights movements, long term community planning, et cetera.

Both North American and Western European Working Groups show a similarity of approach in making the world the central concern and in locating the Church in an ex-centric position to the world. The world sets the agenda for the ecclesia and the Missio Dei is conceived of as the establishment of Shalom in the world - the establishment of social justice, and the humanisation of society. The ecclesia has to be flexible in its structure and be open to change as God Leads it in His Mission. It must demonstrate in its life the true humanity in the form of a servant and look to God in hope for the ultimate achievement of His purpose. In particular the ecclesia must avoid the danger of morphological fundamentalism through attempting to absolutise a past form as the one authentic form.

The views of the nature of mission expressed in this report have been criticised in various quarters. The document undoubtedly influenced the draft report on mission for the Uppsala meeting of the W.C.C. in 1968 which was severely criticised at the meeting. A comparison of the draft and final reports shows that the purely world-centred and world-controlled view was rejected in favour of one in which the importance of the christian community was explicitly recognised and evangelism was given somewhat equivocal recognition. C. Williams has traced the development of this

ex-centric view of the ecclesia in both Protestant and Roman Catholic thought and comments that it represents a shift from the ecclesiological view in which the church exists as a central part of God's will to that in which it is merely a means to an end.⁴⁶ Quoting Robert Adolfs, Williams goes on to say that we must think in existential rather than in essential terms - the ecclesia is an event which is continually reappearing in history. It has a continuing task which is to join Christ where He is struggling against the powers of the world outside the boundaries of the ecclesia.⁴⁷ H. Berkhof and P. Beyerhaus have both strongly criticised this view on the grounds that it does not do justice to the biblical concepts of repentance and evil.⁴⁸

From a different point of view, McGavran⁴⁹ speaks of mission in terms of "what God desires" and concludes that this involves primarily the finding of those who are lost so that they may enter into a redemptive relationship with Jesus Christ and become part of His body the ecclesia. Successful mission manifests itself in the growth of the ecclesia in which the converts from the world are nurtured and trained for mission. McGavran derives his view of mission from what he terms the "harvest theology" of the gospels. He instances the Lord's remarks about finding the lost and the outsiders,

46. Op.cit., p.16ff, where he deals with the ideas of C. Rahner, H. von Balthasar and J.C. Hoekendijk.

47. Ibid., p.23.

48. See the comments by H. Berkhof in "Secular Man and Modern Mission" op.cit. and article "Mission and Humanisation" by P. Beyerhaus in Int Rev of Mission, Jan. 1971.

49. McGavran, D. "Understanding Church Growth" p.31ff. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1970.

and the compelling of the people to come into the feast (the parable of the King's banquet etc.,). He points out that Paul argued in synagogues to persuade both Jews and Gentiles to turn to Christ and felt under compulsion to persuade all men to turn from darkness to light. Whilst recognising the sovereignty of the Spirit, the early Christians nevertheless did all they could to bring men and women to repentance and Baptism. McGavran argues (p.40ff) that the large response to the Gospel as recorded in Acts indicates that the growth of the ecclesia is a primary concern of God, who "is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9)". To sow the seed is important but so also is the reaping of the harvest and this task falls on all the members of the ecclesia. McGavran does not overlook the alleviation of suffering and inequality and points out that many have combined both tasks successfully. He instances (p.61f) missionary physicians and teachers who, when the Spirit of God brought many people to faith in Christ turned from their healing and teaching work to full-time preaching and the shepherding of the flock of new believers.

R.B. Kuiper⁵⁰ quotes with approval J.H. Bavinck's definition of mission as "that activity of the Church---in essence nothing else than an activity of Christ exercised through the Church,---through which the Church calls the peoples of the earth to repentance and faith in Christ so that they may be made His disciples and through baptism be

50. Kuiper, R.B. "God Centred Evangelism" p.7. Banner of Truth Trust, London 1961.

incorporated into the fellowship of those who await the coming of the Kingdom." Kuiper takes evangelism to be a part of mission and proceeds to show how this originates in God the Father, was actualised in the incarnation of God the Son and is continued by God the Spirit in and through the ecclesia. The Divine purpose is not just the conversion of sinners and the growth of the ecclesia and the establishment of Christ's kingdom in the world but also to the intent that it may lead to the glory of God (John 17:24, I Cor. 15:28, Phil. 2:11).

A.C. Conrad⁵¹ speaks of mission in terms of stewardship and in a method similar to that of Kuiper, grounds mission in the Father's love which is expressed in creation and redemption. God the Son becomes the oikonomos of the Father in the present age through His mediatorship. The ecclesia, which is His elect body on earth, continues the fulfilment of His plan of redemption and through it Christ exercises the Lordship committed to Him by the Father. From Pentecost to the Parousia, the Holy Spirit as the administrator of the oikonomia, makes it real and present to the believer by His indwelling presence. The believer in his exercise of the oikonomia becomes a worker together with Christ, a partner (koinonos) in the service (diakonia) of the Missio Dei. This he does primarily by evangelism in which he conveys to men God's gracious offer of redemption through faith in His Son. This is the mission of the ecclesia, whereby, led and

51. Conrad, A.C. "The Divine Economy". Baptist Conference Press, Illinois 1954.

empowered by the Spirit it is enabled to serve God in His purpose to redeem men. The Spirit uses the believer to witness and proclaim Christ in order that He may effect His recreation of men. (2 Cor. 5:17). Conrad comments that this means more than "a mere judicial pronouncement of justification that may take place in some heavenly courtroom; it is a life-changing process of God that affects the believer's total personality---and is an actual change in the life of the individual.---the Christ who died for us (I Thess. 5:10) is, through the Holy Spirit become the Christ who lives in us" (Rom. 8:4,9,10). As in the fellowship of others the believer comes to know his Lord "and the power of His resurrection" (Phil. 3:10) so he becomes the more effective instrument of the Holy Spirit and "the channel through which He releases his transforming power into society".⁵² John Stott⁵³ speaks of the function of the ecclesia in terms of the witness (marturia) of every Christian as part of their partnership (koinonia) of the Gospel.

There are not only differences in denominational viewpoint but also within denominations there are deep cleavages of opinion as to the nature of mission. Although many congregations have become so preoccupied with survival that they have not been actively engaged in mission they would undoubtedly subscribe to the idea that the Church is to be engaged in some form of mission. There would be a small

52. Ibid., p.105.

53. Stott, J.W.R., "One People - Clergy and Laity in God's Church" p.48ff. Falcon, London 1969.

group only who would take the view that "the church is there for any one to come to it if they wish" and who would reject the idea of evangelism or mission in any form. That the Church should be engaged in the world is not seriously questioned; what does polarise the denominations is the nature that this outreach should take.

Some would see it, as sketched out in "The Church for Others", as being the changing of the power structures and the material dispositions of the world so that man may be able to live more nearly to his human potential. Those at the other end of the scale would see it as first gathering men and women to Christ and through transformed men to transform the world. As in the case of the nature of the ecclesia the differences here also stem from a different understanding of the scriptures. The first group would see very little place for specific acts of the Spirit in the world. The West European Group for example mention His work only three times and then only in regard to the gifts of the Spirit in equipping the members for service. There is no discussion of His work in regeneration and recreation or in guiding the ecclesia in its mission. The North American Group treat the work of the Spirit in very similar terms. Both speak of the work of the ecclesia rather in terms of the servant ministry of Jesus. As He served and ultimately suffered for men so the mission of the Church is to follow a similar pattern.

Writing before the publication of the report "The Church for Others", H. Berkhof⁵⁴ comments on the current lack of an

54. Berkhof, H. "The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit" p.9ff. John Knox, Virginia 1964.

adequate understanding of the Person of the Spirit and expresses the view that in ecumenical discussions "we are being driven more and more to the problem of the nature of Christ's presence here and now, i.e., to the nature of the work of the Spirit". He then discusses (p.38) the relation of the Holy Spirit and the mission of the ecclesia and points out that He works with the Word - "the Word brings the Spirit to the heart and the Spirit brings the word within the heart." Berkhof emphasises the work of the Spirit in the individual in regeneration ("we are dead in our sins, but implanted by the Spirit into the life of Him who is the firstborn from the dead") justification and sanctification. God worked in history in the O.T. dispensation, in the Incarnation and atonement; and continues to work in the present dispensation by the Spirit in the ecclesia through the renewing and transformation of the lives of men into the image of Christ.

Structures of the Ecclesia

It is now necessary to look at the structures of the ecclesia as they are being discussed in recent writings. Here there seems to be more agreement in denominational and W.C.C. circles, due very largely to the renewed study of the biblical material on the ecclesia, which has revealed afresh the inner nature of the apostolic church. The first concensus is that the distinction between a clerical and a lay order within the ecclesia is unbiblical and the result of purely historical developments. There is only one people of God - the laos, although there are varieties of ministries

within the ecclesia. (These points have been brought out clearly in the work of Küng and A.T. Hanson as indicated in Chapter II) The N.T. knows nothing of classes within the fellowship - all have a service to fulfil in subjection to one another. The introduction of a special clerical class which gradually arrogated to itself both spiritual and material privileges which it denied the laity, brought as a consequence the passivity of the laity. The viewpoint is most starkly illustrated in the Encyclical "Vehementer Nos" of Pius X (1906) which stated that "the masses have no other right than that of letting themselves be led and of following their pastor as a docile flock". Whilst this is a logical consequence of the pre-Vatican II theology of that denomination, the same attitude exists in lay and clerical minds in many of the protestant denominations in practice if not in official doctrine. This attitude of being led has resulted in a two-tier structure of persons within the ecclesia which controls and defines all other structural arrangements, and results in the end in producing a passive laity. Books such as Kramer's "Theology of the Laity" and Gibbs and Morton's "God's Frozen People" have highlighted this problem. Fortunately there is now much wider agreement among writers, if not in denominational politics, that there is only one ministry and that it belongs to the whole laos who are each given differing charismata for their part in this total ministry (diakonia).

"The Church For Others" report speaks of this unity of the whole ecclesia in mission and states that "the ministry is the ministry of Christ; the ministry of the whole Church in and to the world is a derivative of this", and later, that

"the recent ecumenical discussion has driven home to the churches the notion that the laymen are not non-clergy or non-experts, but the members of the laos, the people whom God has chosen for a particular assignment in His Mission".⁵⁵

Both groups in the Report take seriously the potentiality of all the members for they are the ecclesia in the world.

(Thus, though there is a different conception of the nature of mission in this report, the idea of every member being a missionary is very close to that of the conservative view that every member is to be a witness in the world.)⁵⁶

Diakonia (ministry) is now to be seen as a function of the whole congregation and to allow this to be done effectively the Spirit has given gifts to the members to enable them to be built up for their individual and corporate ministries in the world. It is generally agreed that in the context of corporate ministry the role of the ordained clergyman has to be re-evaluated. The "Church For Others" report speaks of them as enablers, - people whose function it is to assist the formation of the laity so that they in turn may fulfil their corporate ministry in the world. The North American Group envisage that this training or enabling may involve the use of various persons. Even "outsiders may be instructors as well as insiders; they too may bear the gifts of the Spirit."⁵⁷

Whilst both groups envisage a breaking down of the old

55. Op.cit., p.27f, p.80.

56. See Stott, p.51, op.cit.

57. "The Church For Others" p.81, op.cit., also "A Plan Of Union" Chap. VII, para. 26, op.cit.

dichotomy of clerical and lay classes they do not explore the consequences in any detail. In particular they do not consider the question of ordination and discuss whether there is now need to consider all the people of God as ordained to His ministry. Generally, there is uncertainty as to who should be ordained, and whether this should be for a limited time or function. This uncertainty is seen in the 1970 report of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia concerning the ordination of Deaconesses and the continued ordination of Elders. Further study of the matter is envisaged but there is the suggestion that only those "called" to a particular function, in this case Word and Sacrament, should be ordained.⁵⁸

The justification for a certain class of people who may, for the present purpose be called ordained, is considered by A.T. Hanson. He argues that such people would be those who have the task of pioneering the ecclesia. "It (the pioneer ministry) begins by being the Church and its function is only fulfilled when the part of the Church in which it works is growing and active and taking upon itself the responsibilities which the ministry originally wielded."⁵⁹ Earlier, Hanson had stated that this "ministry" does not perform anything that does not belong to the whole Church and which it cannot and should not do, yet he goes on to say that "this does not mean that the function of the ministry gradually devolves on the

58. Proceedings of The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, September 1970, p.202.

59. Op.cit., p. 155.

layman, but that it must be constantly striving to raise up and increase the local ministry in the place where it is at work".⁶⁰ It seems that Hanson differentiates between two groups of people and avoids the real issue which is the question of why any people should be given a status different from others, for this is implied when it is said that the layman cannot exercise this ministry. Although Hanson sees the ministry in Paul's view as the pioneer ecclesia in evangelising a new area (p.86) he sees this task as one which is completed when the new ecclesia has raised up its own band of apostles and ordained them (p.156) to be the new pioneers of living the life of Christ. The ministry is transferred to those who were laymen and prior to that were heathen. Although, according to Hanson, the apostolic office is not restricted to the twelve, but rather is accorded to all who perform the apostolic function, he seems to have some difficulty in determining how this office is distributed in the ecclesia. However he does introduce what is a significant factor and that is the question of the method of the extension of the ecclesia. (This particular aspect will be considered in more detail in the next chapter). Hanson, who views the ordained clergy as the Pioneer ministry "doing nothing but what the ecclesia itself does but acting as the spearhead for the ecclesia" nevertheless, when he discusses the total structure of the ecclesia, goes on to express the opinion that "episcopacy, better than any other form of the ministry expresses the fact that the ministry (ordained clergy)

60. Ibid., p.155.

represents the whole church. The Bishop we take to be the representative of the great church, bearing its authority in a special degree and empowered by it as its representative". His argument here appears to be based on grounds of expediency rather than biblical exegesis for a little later he states regarding this form of order (episcopacy) "If then there is any one form of the ministry which is more likely to be accepted by all Christians, or most Christians, it should have the preference." (p.168). Admittedly Hanson is thinking of a very personal and pastoral form of episcopacy rather than the hierarchical form but the idea runs rather counter to his earlier argument concerning the nature of the ministry as belonging to the whole ecclesia.

Küng, when discussing the priesthood of all believers⁶¹ argues, on the basis of the N.T. evidence, that the preaching of the Word, and the administration of the sacraments belong to the whole body of Christ because all are priests unto God. The apostolate is not something secured by special rules of succession but is the responsibility which belongs to the whole church and which is exercised by being faithful to the apostolic witness and service of the Gospel. "--apostolic succession is not a static attribute of the church -- (it) is an historical dimension that has to be constantly fulfilled anew in history. Apostolicity too must continually be achieved afresh".⁶² In the discharge of the apostolate various ministries are required for which diverse charismata

61. Op.cit., p.370ff.

62. Ibid., p.358.

are granted. This "enabling" is recognised by the community and all are called to be voluntarily subject to them. There is never, according to Küng, a unilateral obedience due to some men in the community, -voluntary and mutual submission of all to all is required. Earlier in his book (Chapter 2) he had shown that it is impossible on the basis of the N.T. evidence to decide which gifts were considered such as gave over-riding responsibility to certain people. Likewise it is impossible to decide the exact significance of the laying on of hands and hence to limit its use to a certain group of people. Küng concludes his later section with the observation - "a frightening gulf separates the Church of today from the original constitution of the Church".⁶³ When however he comes to consider the justification for the so-called ordained ministry as we know it today he sees it as a development away from charismatic ministries, "the authority of which could only be recognised post-factu by the community," to those "exercised by special commission and with an authority given in advance".

In using this approach to justify his argument for the present form of an ordained ministry Küng differentiates too much between the charismatic and the appointed ministry. There is no biblical evidence to suggest that these must be seen, after the twelve, as being antithetical. The Pastoral Letters and Acts, which speak of the appointment of elders, do not suggest that such men were not possessed of a charisma that fitted them for the task. In fact, the requirements in

63. Ibid., p.413.

I Tim. and Titus for elders etc., indicate that the charismata of teaching and ruling were to be in evidence before appointment or recognition of the elder or bishop by the congregation. On the other hand there is no evidence of so-called charismatics being accepted as spiritual leaders without the testing and recognition of their gifts by the community (I John 4:1). In fact there is specific direction to test the spirits and there is even a charisma for this purpose (I Cor. 12:10). Küng is forced (p.426f), in order to justify his deduction that the appointed ministry is the logical consequence for the preservation of the apostolic testimony rather than a charismatic ministry, to insist on a sacramental view of ordination or appointment. Here the faith and intention of the one ordaining is a necessary prerequisite to the ordination and the laying on of hands becomes an effective sign by which the ordinand is equipped for his ministry. It is unfortunate that Küng does not apply the same care to this stage of his analysis as he does in deriving the understanding of the diakonia as belonging to the whole people of God, for the "ordained Ministry" is only one part of this diakonia and not necessarily the most important one. (It could be well argued for example that the task of witnessing in the world is equally or more important.) Likewise, he too quickly and without biblical support limits the right of publicly preaching the Word and administering the sacraments in the community to those who have been ordained by the laying on of hands to such a ministry. Interestingly enough however he sees no objection to any member of the community doing these things

"privately" in the world as the occasion demands as distinct from the public acts in the congregation!

In dealing with the overall structure of the ecclesia Küng accepts the concept of deacon, presbyter (pastor) and bishop as being that most suited to the needs of the ecclesia although he envisages that they will need to be different in some ways from the current conceptions of his denomination. In particular, bishops will need to have a pastoral rather than an administrative role and many more of them will be needed for this function to be properly discharged. On the other hand, Küng concludes that the presbyter (pastor) is able to perform all the functions of the bishop so that the latter becomes a pastor to the pastors.

In Boyd's book "The Underground Church" we are given a picture of a community of people amongst whom "leadership" is exercised by charismatic individuals and amongst whom there is as yet no formal organisation. It is of course too early to say whether or not a structure of authority will harden in the future and whether the pattern of the post-apostolic ecclesia will be repeated as a response to external pressure and as a means of conserving the particular understanding of the faith. As mentioned in an earlier section the principal characteristic of this North American movement is the experience of fellowship or community. The other less defined characteristics are commitment to mental integrity, honesty, and the help of others. The accounts in Boyd's book of the life of this church, whilst indicating that the sacraments are celebrated, lacks evidence concerning the

preaching of the Word and of evangelism. P. Moore (Jr) an Episcopalian Bishop discussing some of the theological aspects of this new phenomena⁶⁴ clearly indicates this omission when he says "---the mode of articulation of the Spirit, the means of revealing the Spirit, is, in our day through persons, through community of persons and through event. -- by constant re-enactment of the Eucharist, Christian bodies have been able to purify themselves--. The constant opening up of the Eucharist has allowed the re-entry of the Spirit". J.J. Brown in the same book discusses the embryo form of the movement and points out that although it relies on established denominations for its ministries yet the question of validity of orders never arises in practice - con-celebration of the eucharist is normal.⁶⁵ He goes on to suggest that the movement must shift away from denominational backgrounds and develop its own autonomy in the matter of the sacraments and see itself as a genuine part of the body of Christ (to become in other words a new denomination). G.J. Haffner expresses the opposite opinion, namely that the underground movement is a passing stage in the life of the ecclesia which represents a renewal in its life (in its visible form) and a return to the essentials of the faith that have been obscured by the policies of the official church.⁶⁶ As with other writers in this book who have a Roman Catholic background, Haffner sees the eucharist as the element that constitutes the

64. Op.cit., p. 226.

65. Ibid., p.31f.

66. Ibid., p.120ff.

Christian community - "The gathering for the eucharist makes the church exist. The community is the Church".

In comment of this series of essays it must be said firstly that they arise predominantly out of a disaffected section of the North American Episcopal and Roman Catholic priesthood in which questions of authority and ministry have been most acute in recent years. However they undoubtedly also portray the views of many within the protestant denominations - as can be seen by the views expressed in the "Church For Others". They represent a trend away from concern about theological reflection and orthodoxy to a concern for fellowship and action. This concern for "Christopraxis" was noted earlier in the discussion of the views of Wiesser and O'Meara. It represents a turning from the rigid liturgical and hierarchical patterns of the past towards a more democratic expression of the faith and freedom for the experience of real fellowship. Although much of the trend is clearly in line with the N.T. pattern yet there are significant omissions. Mission has been reduced to providing brotherhood and succour to those in need. The element of the proclamation of the Gospel as a call to repentance and discipleship is missing. It is doubtful whether, outside of its own eucharist gatherings, the movement can be identified by outsiders as specifically Christian. The inclusion of Students For Democratic Society as part of the movement suggests that the lack of doctrinal reflection will result ultimately in a complete loss of Christian identity. Within the fellowship the prophetic Word has little

real place (admittedly at times it is heard along with secular writings)⁶⁷ and when the fires of the present charismatic leaders have burnt out the movement will either die away or revert to the very form of institutionalism which it has sought to escape. Alternatively as Haffner expects, its continuing presence may bring about the renewal within the denominations from which the present followers have come. The emphasis on the Eucharist as the constitutive element of the ecclesia, whilst giving a point of unity, will fail in this purpose unless it is accompanied by the preaching of the Word of God. Unity in the spiritual sense has ultimately to do with a divine relationship rather than conformity of external acts, no matter how sacredly they may be treated. Without the prophetic Word, the eucharist is in danger of becoming purely a communal meal which emphasises the solidarity of those partaking rather than a sacrament in which the unity of believers in Christ is emphasised and renewed.

There is however a very different form of the "underground church" existing in many Communist countries at the present time. The information on this Church is sketchy and largely unconsolidated. It is necessary to distinguish between the officially tolerated and controlled denominations in some of the Communist countries and those unofficial proscribed communities of Christians that meet secretly. The question as to whether such groups should exist separately from the official denominations or whether the State is justified in its persecution of the groups is beyond the purpose of this

67. See the "Liturgy" on p.228f for an example of this weakness, *ibid.*

essay. Their existence and growth is real and for that reason alone they deserve study as a modern adaptation of the ecclesia to meet conditions of persecution.⁶⁸

In contrast to the life of the North American "underground church", those in Communist countries centre their activities on the preaching and the teaching from the Word. (Lack of information make it unwise to dogmatise on this point.) Whilst this may be due to the action of the authorities in destroying the copies of the Scriptures in many instances, and thus making them precious, it seems rather to be due to the fact that the ecclesia has found that it is nourished and sustained by the Word. The testimony of Christians escaped from Communist countries witnesses to the importance placed on bible study and to the shortage of bibles in these countries. Bull discusses this in his books and points out the place a knowledge of the Scriptures plays in helping Christians to withstand imprisonment and isolation. The next most observable characteristic is the prayer life of these communities. The celebration of the sacraments of Baptism and Communion tends to fall into the background although both are observed.

The structure of the underground gatherings is difficult to discern through lack of information but it seems to resemble the N.T. pattern in which some charismatic teacher or preacher

68. Information can be gained from R. Wurmbrand's books "In God's Underground" and "Tortured For Christ" Hodder and Stoughton, London, for Soviet, Bulgarian and Roumanian conditions. L. Lyall's "Come Wind Come Weather" and G. Bull's "When Iron Gates Yield" and "The Sky is Red" provide sketchy information about the Chinese situation. R.W. Solberg's "God and Caesar in East Germany" gives a picture of life in a church that has been harassed but not forbidden.

draws about him a group of believers who, when they are mature in the faith in turn establish other groups. The charisma seems to be recognised and submitted to by the members without any formal setting apart or denominational recognition. Many officially ordained pastors also provide leadership in the underground groups but the bulk of leadership seems to come from those who have had no formal theological training. Of the mission of this ecclesia it is not possible to point to a uniform pattern through lack of details but there is clear evidence of men and women being won to loyalty to Christ and His service even in the face of possible persecution and loss of freedom. Many of the reported conversions have actually occurred in places of imprisonment through the loving deeds of Christian prisoners.

This brief consideration of the pattern of life in the Communist underground ecclesia is necessary because it discloses one of the many viable forms that can exist in this century. (Its similarity to that of the first few centuries of the church in the Roman empire cannot be overlooked.) Much of the recent writing about the structures and the mission of the ecclesia has proceeded on the implicit assumption of the concept of Christendom - that is, the ecclesia lives in a milieu which is either vaguely or explicitly favourable to Christianity or, at worst, neutral to it. (Lenski⁶⁹ has shown for example how pervasive the Christian teachings are in the society of the U.S.A. and a similar statement could

69. Lenski, G. "The Religious Factor". Doubleday, New York 1963.

be made of most Western Christianised countries.) However the history of the ecclesia discloses that this happy situation does not always exist and that it may have to live under conditions of persecution as well as patronage or indifference. Thus any consideration of the mission and structures of the ecclesia must take all these possibilities into account. In many cases it is not open to the ecclesia to participate in the kind of projects discussed in "The Church For Others". The only form of mission possible to those in Communist countries, especially those that actively persecute Christians, is personal witness and evangelism. The mission has perforce to be individual rather than corporate in its nature. If the view expressed in the Church of Scotland Assembly report "Priorities of Mission in Scotland in the 1970s" that "people cannot be reached and changed unless the Church aims to transform and humanise the entire community" is correct, then many congregations would be denied the possibility of participating in the Missio Dei.

Finally, in order to complete the evidence on structure and mission, it is necessary to consider the inter-denominational movement that was discussed in Chapter 3. This group is important to the study of mission for several reasons. Firstly, in their work together they represent an alternative form of ecumenicity which ignores denominational boundaries and is united in its missionary task. Secondly, they evidence no organisational hierarchy or lay/clerical differentiation but have only functional committees which are subordinate to the authority of the group. Persons with certain charismata

are accepted within the whole group to act on behalf of the group. Thirdly their unity in mission is based on a basic agreement on such matters of faith as the sufficiency and authority of the scriptures, the necessity of calling men to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, the gift of the Holy Spirit in regeneration etc., Whilst there would be some divergence on secondary matters (eschatology, baptism) these do not normally affect the unity of the groups.⁷⁰

Whilst many of these interdenominational organisations began because of lack of missionary concern by the denominations, their continued existence after the denominations started to take an interest in world-wide missions and youth work is due to two principal reasons. Not all areas of the world and not all types of service missions have been covered by the denominations. Bible translation and leprosy work are two such examples where specialised agencies have been a continuing requirement even though many denominational missions undertake such work in their own areas in a limited way. Specialisation has meant that more effective use of resources could be made and this can be most effectively achieved by an interdenominational mission. The other reason is the continuing divergence of theological views in the denominations which has caused the conservative/orthodox wing to retain and extend their work in order to give effect to their understanding of the Gospel, in which the conversion of men as individuals is of primary importance. The members play a

70. See for example the doctrinal basis of the "Inter Varsity Fellowship" which is typical of the movement as a whole.

somewhat ambiguous role in that whilst committed to support the work of their particular mission(s) they are also committed, as members, to the work of their own denomination. In this latter role they seek usually to exert a corrective on what they consider to be a defective view of mission. As a result there is often tension in the local congregation and in the higher structures of the denomination on the question of the nature of mission and the way in which it is to be implemented. Not only is the group of importance because of their numbers amongst the core workers of the congregations and hence of their influence in the actual local life of the ecclesia, but also because their missions have brought into being large groups of indigenous ecclesia in other countries whose constitutions and Christian understandings mirror the views of the parent missionary Societies. These national ecclesia in turn have sought to cooperate with others of similar views and this has led to formation of area Alliances within which cooperative work is undertaken. Thus, alongside the area councils of the World Council of Churches, there is a parallel, and in some areas of the world, an equally large Evangelical Alliance.

The significance of the interdenominational missionary movement is not only in its size but more particularly in its demonstration that unity in mission is possible across denominational boundaries. Whilst this has been shown most clearly in foreign missions in the past, it is being demonstrated more and more in the case of home mission through the Christian Unions and other interdenominational groups. It

has demonstrated the unity of the laos in mission and avoided any differentiation of the laos in so doing. Whilst the members of the groups have seen their role in their own denominations to be one of influence towards a particular view of the life and work of the ecclesia, the adoption by their denominations of a view of mission along the lines of social action rather than personal conversion could lead to a realignment of loyalties and the establishing of new denominations. The continued growth of the movement indicates also the way in which members denied what they consider to be an adequate say in decisions on mission of their own denomination can find a means of expressing their responsibility for mission. Too often the local member of the ecclesia can have no say (by representation) in the decisions on mission because of ecclesiastical polity. This point has been explicitly recognised in the COCU "Plan for Union" in which an effort has been made to make the policy-forming bodies (Synod, Assembly) truly representative gatherings of the local ecclesia.⁷¹

From a consideration of the biblical and church history evidence, McClelland⁷² rejects the idea of only a single form of order in the ecclesia. He points out that the radical reformers went back "to copy the New Testament model that had served before the fall of the church - its establishment as the Empire's official religion by the Emperor Constantine". Following Tillich, McClelland favours the understanding of the

71. See "A Plan of Union" Chapter 8, Op.cit.

72. Op.cit., p.65ff.

ecclesia as the work of the Holy Spirit in creating a spiritual community which is manifested in various ways.⁷³

"the institutions and the offices serving the Church---are matters of sociological adequacy, practical expediency and human wisdom."⁷³ The diversity of N.T. order is so great and so conditioned by the actual situation of the time that it is futile to try and find only one order for today. When speaking of a radical church (he uses the term not only in the sense of looking carefully back to the roots of the ecclesia but also to a form to suit current sociological conditions) to meet the problems of the future McClelland leaves the impression that any form will do provided there is a mutual recognition of ordained ministries and a sharing in mission. "We must be free to proceed into the modern world by searching for new forms" is the only suggestion that he gives. Mackie⁷⁴ comments that the W.C.C. sponsored study of some fifteen denominations around the world shows that a great diversity of forms are viable and that more notice of this fact must be taken in theological studies.

Hoekendijk⁷⁵ relegates the clergy to a non constitutive role and talks of them "as the Lord's gracious plus to the church". In his mind they cannot be regulative for the church because it is Christ Himself who constitutes the ecclesia even when there are only two or three gathered in His name. He sees the ecclesia as complete without ordained

73. Tillich, P. "Systematic Theology III" p.162ff. Nisbet, London 1964.

74. Mackie, S.G. (Ed.) "Can Churches be Compared" p.88f. W.C.C., Geneva 1970.

75. Op.cit., p.98ff.

clergy for it is the Spirit who equips all members of the ecclesia for ministry, but he values the clergy for the "plus" that they bring. From a different theological position, S.P. Schilling⁷⁶ points out that in Methodism there is only one recognised order - that of elder or presbyter. Although Wesley had in fact accepted elders and deacons as constituting two orders in the church, in practice the order of deacon has become extinct. Ordination is viewed as the recognition given by the ecclesia to a special call and concomitant gifts by God for the ministry of the Word and Sacraments and pastoral care. "Those who discharge this ministry exercise for the whole Church powers and functions which reside in the whole Church rather than in a special class within it." P.C. Watson⁷⁷ emphasises that the authority, although bestowed by fellow members, is granted by Christ Himself (perhaps 'recognised' would be a better term than 'bestowed'?). "His authority belongs not to him (the ordinand) personally but to his office the purpose of which is the perpetuation of Christ's own ministry". Schilling points also to the fact that the ministry of those who preach the Word derives from this one ministry to which the whole Church is summoned.

In his review of the recent thinking on the Church, C. Williams noted⁷⁸ that there is now general agreement with the idea that the ministry of the congregation is the ministry of Christ but he pointed out the continuing divergence of

76. Anderson, G.H. (Ed.) "Christian Mission in Theological Perspective" p.34ff. Abingdon, Nashville 1967.

77. Ibid., see p.35f and notes.

78. Op.cit., p.100ff.

view with regard to order and structure in the ecclesia. R. Mehl viewed order as conditional upon the sociological situation of the time whilst others, e.g. A. Richardson, regard the traditional three-tier system evolved in post-apostolic days as the Spirit-directed solution to the question of order. Williams discusses these views in terms of continuity based on the understanding of James as an apostle of the Davidic-line leadership, p.114, and in terms of discontinuity based on the understanding of Paul as representing a break in the established line and indicating the power of God to raise up His own Witnesses. He considers there is value in combining both as has been done in the Church of South India. There the 'catholic' order is taken as a symbol of apostolic continuity but at the same time the genuineness of other ministries is fully accepted and the two are allowed to grow together. Williams himself appears to accept the triple order of Bishop, Presbyter, and Deacon as the most desirable form of order for the present time. The COCU plan for Union (1970) accepts this pattern as normative.

In summarising this section it can be said that the biblical studies of the last twenty years have borne fruit in that the N.T. view of the ministry as belonging to the whole Church has been regained. That is, the ministry belongs to the whole 'laou tou Theou' and not to an individual. Within the laos certain men have received charismata for teaching and oversight and this they exercise on behalf of the others. There seems also to be greater acceptance of the fact that many of the present denominational forms have been sociologically

and historically determined and they they cannot therefore be considered normative for all time. Pluriform structures may well be needed within denominations. Apart from the initial work of establishing ecclesia there seems to be no biblical evidence to support the view that oversight was the responsibility of one man, rather, that in each congregation this was a shared episcopate. Hanson's ideas on the pioneer ministry point to the need to rethink the matter of the order of the ecclesia in relation to the building up of ecclesia and to the possible acceptance of different forms of order within the one denomination. Hoekendijk's view of the completeness of the small house church suggests that, at least in the initial stages of growth, any mature Christian may be appointed to lead the group.

Fellowship

The question of Christian development within the ecclesia has received rather inadequate treatment in many of the recent reports. The "Priorities For Mission in the 1970s" Report speaks of the need to move to smaller groups in the parishes "to foster a feeling of trust and deep commitment among members which would complement the wider loyalty to the larger unit". They would come together as "a periodic meeting of friends" rather than be "a Sunday assembly of strangers". The groups would provide a situation for the genuine intimate fellowship of faith, and would be based on small geographical areas or common interest zones. The Report envisages that these groups would be led by suitably

trained lay people and would provide for a depth of relationship in which all would begin to contribute to the mission of the ecclesia in the community. The actual wording of the Report suggests that the writers were not entirely clear as to the real purpose and value of the small groups for they add that not all members might participate in the groups and that therefore they may have to be regarded as supplementary to the corporate worship of the community. On the other hand they express the view that all members should belong to at least one of these groups.

Hoekendijk⁷⁹ on the other hand speaks of the small group as a genuine ecclesia in "which whatever happens in the sanctuary on Sunday can take place every day in the house church". There is however a significant advantage which is that real oversight becomes possible in virtue of the small numbers "in a group where everyone knows one another and can admonish one another" (p.91). Hoekendijk quotes Luther to the effect that such groups should not be turned into miniature churches but that the possibilities that this kind of context offers should be utilised by directing everything towards "word prayer and mutual love". There can be no denominational boundaries in such groups which must be regarded as a common and completely normal form of ecclesiastical life. The parish pattern which has been taken as the normative pattern is only a late arrival in the history of the ecclesia and is itself only an adaptation of a missionary form to a particular

79. Op.cit., pp.83 - 107.

societal condition of the time, namely the small village. It no longer functions in the original way for a variety of reasons, - mobility of people, estranged groups etc., and the ecclesia has to take a new missionary form. The house church or the student group or the factory group must therefore be looked on as the ecclesia in the fullest sense. It is constituted by Jesus Christ the Lord and the people are drawn into His office and appointed to His service to the world and thus become "a missionary church" (p.99). This church is complete and does not need to wait on the presence of ordained officers before the Word can be preached or the sacraments administered. Hoekendijk does not seek to do away with ordained clergy but as we saw earlier rather insists that whilst they are not essential to the fullness of the ecclesia they are a "super-abundant gift" where they are available. Finally, in pursuing his understanding of the house church to its biblical background, he speaks of open communion without concern for denominational affiliations and suggests a return to the communion meal as the proper *sitz im leben* for the celebration and renewal of fellowship (p.104f). Within these small groups, genuine *koinonia* becomes possible.

Although Hoekendijk is speaking essentially of missionary type situations whereas the Church of Scotland Report dealt with the maintenance of large existing congregations, the matter of the development of the spiritual fellowship between members is similar in the two cases. It is only in such small groups that this can be developed and therefore they are not an optional albeit desirable form but in fact are

essential to the building up of the ecclesia for mission. It does not of course follow that small groups are ipso-facto engaged in mission - this can only occur as the group builds itself up in study and prayer and discipline. Without such a program the small group may easily become a christian ghetto. Whilst Hoekendijk's emphasis on the completeness of the small group is biblical it does not follow that all small groups should function in this fashion for there are situations, such as in factories or colleges or in the groups envisaged in the Scottish report, where study and prayer and mission are sufficient. Stott⁸⁰ and Tanburn⁸¹ also discuss the value of the small groups and their place in the wider context of the ecclesia. They point out that these groups remove the mental hindrance that many people have about entering church buildings "because they have rejected not Christ but the Church". Tanburn sees one of the principal values in the groups as being places providing unconditional care for needy persons and yet having a real sense of purpose or mission. He speaks (p.57f) of the need of group therapy and of the groups as a kind of 'Sinners Anonymous', where people help one another. Both Stott and Tanburn stress the fact that in the small group pastoral oversight becomes really possible and that in such groups there are normally people who are able to undertake this responsibility. K. Miller⁸² speaks of small groups of Christians meeting informally for study and

80. Op.cit., p. 81ff.

81. Tanburn, J. "Open House" p. 61f. Falcon, London 1970.

82. Miller, K. "The Taste of New Wine" p.73ff. Word Books, London 1965.

discussion in order to hammer out their understanding of the Christian life and its responsibilities. He sees these groups as adjuncts to the normal congregational life in which people may be helped in their Christian understanding as well as prepared for leadership within the life of the congregation.

Tanburn sees the role of the ordained clergyman as being that of a bishop as far as teaching, counselling and pastoral care are concerned, who would have a congregational responsibility through the leaders of the small groups. These latter people would be ordained as elders or pastors of that group and take responsibility for the people in the group. This would be a local non-permanent ordination which could be ratified on a wider basis if desired. Tanburn claims that the house churches have the additional advantage of uniting christian families instead of dividing them as usually happens in zonal or age or sex differentiated groups. In his view zonal groups cannot be truly the ecclesia because they divide rather than conserve the family unit.

A small group, having a missionary orientation is the Christian Union or Fellowship in factories and offices. In the U.K. these have grown steadily in number from since 1942 until there are now almost 300 of them (1970 Annual Report of The Workers Christian Fellowship). Their aim is to bring Christians together "so that strengthened by prayer bible study and fellowship they may engage in witness and mission within their place of work".⁸³ The groups are principally

83. Workers Christian Fellowships. 1970 Annual Report, London.

evangelistic in their nature but they also exercise a caring ministry for sick workmates or others having special problems. The groups do not consider themselves "ecclesia" in the sense that Hoekendijk has understood it for they insist that their members must be faithful attenders in their own denominational congregations. They are organisationally independent of one another although affiliated with a central advisory body. Leadership in the groups is varied and generally consists of a leader and a secretary/treasurer. Occasionally a local clergyman would be the study leader but more usually leadership comes from within the group. The number of groups in the U.K. is increasing at a rate of about 15 per year. The groups have a conservative theological basis as is indicated by the declaration of faith that has to be made by office-bearers. Some conflict has occurred with industrial chaplains over theological issues and roles.

Tanburn⁸⁴ refers to the danger of "chaplains robbing the laity of their vocation in industry". With the growing emphasis on the need for industrial chaplaincies⁸⁵ there is an urgent need for the denominations to think through this question and find a way of encouraging its members to bear effective witness in Industry. It could be said that because the ecclesia has failed to prepare its members for mission, their silence in industry has necessitated the introduction of chaplaincies. To extend chaplaincies would be to further

84. Op.cit., p. 56.

85. See "Priorities For Mission in the 1970's" paras. 36ff. Op.cit.

reduce the members to passivity at a time when the need for all members to be engaged in mission is being publicised in denominational assemblies. (There is very little difference in the functions that Chaplains and Unions perform - each has certain advantages denied to the other.)⁸⁶ It seems a reasonable assumption that suitable training of the members would obviate the need for chaplaincies and free men and finance for other functions.

In spite of the varieties of views that have been expressed concerning the nature of the ecclesia it is possible now to see some lines of agreement, at least in the basic organisation. There is firstly a fairly general recognition that the static parish system which took for granted that the area of the parish was a part of Christendom is no longer relevant because of the mobility of people and the fact that the vast majority of the population have no real interest in the ecclesia. This does not mean however, that a "gathered congregation" concept, based on the qualification of residence in a given area is no longer a viable concept. (In view of the rapidly increasing amount of leisure time available to people they are spending as much time in their residential area as in most other places.)⁸⁷ It does mean however that some additional groupings must be envisaged, based on common interests of work or study. In this regard Gibson Winter⁸⁸

86. Compare for example the statement on Industrial Chaplains functions issued by the Home Board of the Church of Scotland and the functions of Christian Unions as set out in the publication of Workers Christian Fellowships.

87. See Chapter X in "The Church Inside Out" in which Hoekendijk discusses the ecclesia in the world of tomorrow.

88. Op.cit., p.121ff.

overstates his argument for scrapping the congregations based on residential qualification. The congregational system has not failed in the past because it is too remote from the centres of power but because the ecclesia has failed to understand both its own nature and function and the nature of the world in which it is placed.

Secondly there is a growing agreement of the importance of the small group in the life and mission of the ecclesia, although there is still a diversity of views concerning the functioning of the group, i.e., as to whether it is to be treated as a church in its own right or whether it is to be seen as having a specialised training function for mission. It does seem clear from the discussion above that in the majority of established congregations the small group must be seen as a place for spiritual nurture and training for mission. In pioneer work in new areas, the small group, in the absence of any parent congregation, must be considered as the ecclesia in all its fullness. The form that the group takes will be determined very largely by the function that it has to fulfil. This is well illustrated by La Mission Populaire de France⁸⁹ in its work at St. Nazaire. It was set up in an industrial situation to make an impact on the workers of that area. The surrounding protestant congregations had made no effort to contact the workers and so La Mission was left to develop its own work. Velten comments that those who made some form of commitment to Christ have been reluctant to join the surrounding congregations and La Mission became in effect another

89. Velten, G. "Mission in Industrial France". S.C.M., London 1968.

denomination as it had to provide Word and Sacraments for these people. The whole experiment, though it reflects well on the work of Velten and his assistants in doing something that urgently needed to be done, shows up the lack of understanding of mission on the part of the protestant denominations in the area and the resulting fragmentation of the ecclesia. Nothing that was done at La Mission was beyond the resources of the local congregations, - given the understanding and the will to do the work. St. Nazaire is a tribute to the way in which the estranged working class can be reached for Christ as well as a warning to the Church of the consequence of failing in mission. In spite of Hoekendijk's enthusiasm, house or group ecclesia need to be tied to some larger denomination and have the possibility of incorporation within it at a later stage of its growth in order to avoid further fragmentation of the ecclesia and to give the necessary support and correction.

Size and Service

The place of small groups has just been discussed from the point of view of their role in the building up of the ecclesia for mission and witness. It remains to be considered whether there is an upper size limit that should be imposed on a congregation or collection of small groups. Only a few of the relevant factors can be considered and no conclusion can be expected to apply to every situation. A convenient starting point in the discussion is the comments of Dr. H. Walker reported in British Weekly, Oct. 16, 1969. He expressed the

view that parishes of the future (he presumably had in mind Scotland) should have about 12,000 people resident in them and that they should be served by a team-ministry of 4 or 5 people. On the basis of the Church of Scotland statistics (General Assembly Report 1971), this would mean about 2,700 communicants with a possible average weekly attendance of about 450 people with peak attendances at communion of up to 1,200. (The latter figures are based on the author's observations and questions to ministers). The problem of the members of the team getting to know the people, and most of them would need to have some form of contact with the majority of the members, is enormous and raises serious question as to the possibility of developing the koinonia that is an essential part of the life of the ecclesia.

Gibbs and Morton⁹⁰ speak of 200 as being the ideal size of a congregation for one man to pastor and to get to know the members on a proper basis. Tanburn⁹¹ doubts that this can be done even with 200 people in a conventional congregational structure if the desirable relationship of trust and mutual help is to develop. He sees the solution to be along the lines of small groups with an elder or lay pastor in charge of each and the clergyman having the job of being a bishop to these leaders. This does not mean that he considers the clergyman should have no real contact with members but that the real pastoral work must be carried out in those groups with the clergy giving help only when it is beyond the

90. Gibbs, M. & Morton, T.R. "God's Frozen People" Fontana/Collins, London 1964.

91. Op.cit., p.53f.

resources of the group members. A similar scheme has been used in the Elders District meetings of the Presbyterian churches in which the elders meet with the minister once a month to prepare their study material for their groups, to feed back to him pastoral problems and needs and to be informed on the work of the whole congregation. The question of size now hinges on the number of groups that one man can effectively guide and support.

Allied to the question of size of congregations is the matter of team ministries. Both Walker and the report "Priorities For Mission in the 1970s" recommend the use of team ministries in which some degree of specialisation of function then becomes possible. In the report "The Church and Its Changing Ministry"⁹² questions are raised concerning the advantages and disadvantages of having associate ministers and specialist ministers in a large congregation. It is of course possible only with the larger congregations who can afford to have several fully paid men "on the staff". Walker envisages, for his desirable size parish, a clergyman and one or two assistant clergymen, a teacher for the christian education program, a lay-evangelist/parish visitor, or a secretary. Attractive as the proposal may sound from the point of view of allowing greater efficiency through each person specialising on one area of the work instead of forcing the one parish clergyman to be a 'jack of all trades', there are long-term disadvantages that must be considered. It must be asked for example whether the use of full-time paid specialists is not an easy way of bypassing the stewardship

92. Johnson, R.C. (Ed.) p.162. "The Church and It's Changing Ministry", United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., Philadelphia 1961.

of the time of the members, many of whom may be quite prepared to pay for this service by cash giving. On the other hand it must also be asked whether such a complement of specialists does not deny to some members the exercise of possible forms of diakonia. Rather than building up the diakonia of the congregation as a whole, it may in fact decrease it. If Küng, Hoekendijk and others are correct in their reading of the N.T. evidence of diakonia as belonging to the whole ecclesia, then the exercise of this responsibility belongs to all the members and not just a few - whether paid or not. In most groups of society and hence in most local congregations there are members already trained by virtue of their secular occupations or willing to undergo training for specialist work amongst youth or in christian education and who, with encouragement and support can exercise a specialist ministry in the congregation.

The above problem is one particular manifestation of the more general question of the stewardship of time. By insisting on certain academic standards of theological education, most of the denominations have removed the ordained ministry of the Word and Sacraments beyond the possibility of part-time preparation. The Eastern Orthodox denomination, apart from requiring attendance at a seminary for about a month, have ordained local members of the congregation to the priesthood. We have noted above that Tanburn envisage this possibility as well. Boone Porter⁹³ lists similar practices in other parts of the world. The British Council of Churches report

93. In "New Forms of Ministry" Op.cit., p.84ff.

"The Shape Of The Ministry" is quite emphatic in its endorsement of a part-time ministry and part-time training.⁹⁴ The SouthWell Diocese of the Church of England is already experimenting with part-time training for the ministry of the word and sacraments and hopes shortly to ordain men trained in this fashion.⁹⁵ Part-time training and part-time ministry are not necessarily related although this may be the case in many instances, nor can it be said in advance what is required in a particular situation. The present questioning of the matter indicates that the way is being opened up for a return to an effective use of all charismata within the congregation, including that of preaching.

Discussions with staff members of the Department of Ministry of the Church of Scotland indicate that the communicant membership of a congregation for a self-supporting parish is between 600 and 700 members. Walker's figure for the size of his proposed parish of 12,000 people to support five paid "staff" is therefore fairly close to reality. If however the diakonia of the members of the congregation is developed sufficiently then it can be easily shown that the time available from a full-time worker can be matched by the members of the ecclesia. Stott⁹⁶ shows, from statistics for the service of members of the congregation over several years, that the average person spent nearly three hours of his spare time in the service of the ecclesia per week. Twenty such

94. British Council of Churches, "The Shape of the Ministry". London 1966.

95. See comment on training scheme in Diocese of Southwark Note 14 to Boone Fisher's article, Op.cit.

96. Op.cit., p.55f.

people could provide the equivalent of one full-time worker and a parish of 80 to 100 active members could achieve the work of five men as far as hours are concerned. Stott gives no figures to indicate the percentage of the congregation that are prepared to serve at that level although his figures of 43 people attending the instruction classes each year suggests that in fact it was a fairly high percentage. On a conservative basis, a congregation of 200 to 300 members should be able to provide the manpower equivalent to five fully paid men - provided that they have been properly motivated and trained.

It is obvious from the nature of congregational duties that not all could be done out of working hours by the members e.g. funerals, some hospital visitation, school scripture etc. (Although it has to be remembered that Quaker and the Open Brethren Assemblies operate on this basis). Nor perhaps could all tasks be done in the proper way because of lack of suitable training on the part of the members. Some would want to claim that the expertise of the "professional" justifies their employment. Hoekendijk⁹⁷ however, argues that once a restriction is made requiring expertise or professional competence, then what results is not diakonia in the biblical sense. In any case it would also have to be shown that the standard of service, from the point of view of competence, that could be rendered by the members of the congregation was quite unacceptable. In the majority of areas in which there

97. Op.cit., p.146f.

are established congregations it is doubtful if such an argument could be sustained. In small, newly established areas, especially low-cost housing estates which tend to have a high proportion of unskilled persons, this lack of ability may be a real problem. The solution to this question of the use of experts would therefore seem to lie in a different direction to that of including them as part of a paid team ministry. In the bigger, established congregations, it would be a retrograde step to introduce them as part of the ministering fully supported team - at best they should be available when required to train members for service and as resource persons. A group of several congregations in an area could support these advisory personnel. In smaller, developing congregations they could perhaps work part-time and be supported by the contributions of larger congregations, until there were local members ready and able to take over the service. The development of responsible diakonia on the part of each member cannot be traded for expertise without ultimate harm to the mission of the ecclesia.

In summary it can be said that there is no one pattern of organisation that holds for all places and all times. Nevertheless, the need for koinonia as a means of building up the witness and service of the congregation remains a constant factor. In addition, the need for opportunity of members to give service through the use of their own time is also a constant factor. From the initiation of a Christian witness in a new area to the development of a congregation of several hundreds say ten years later, may well demand, in fact

almost certainly will demand, a continually changing structure and pattern of life if the ecclesia is to participate fully and effectively in witness and mission.

Conclusion

In the survey of a limited yet representative number of writings on the life and mission of the ecclesia, which have originated from ecumenical and denominational sources, a number of points of convergence and divergence of views have been noted. These can be summarised as follows.

In the first place, careful study of the biblical material has disclosed a wider range of patterns and service in the ecclesia than has generally been accepted in the past. This conclusion has been supported by the W.C.C. studies of congregations throughout the world which showed a wide variety of viable forms for the local ecclesia. In the second place there is a concensus that the ecclesia exists for mission although there is some divergence of thought as to whether it is to be solely identified with mission or whether there is an inward function to be performed as well. ^{Old Testament} ~~Old Testament~~ biblical studies have disclosed the function that Israel was called to play amongst the nations in the Mission of God to the world and this has helped to illuminate the function of the ecclesia in that same mission. Thirdly there has been general agreement concerning the ecclesia as a servant people whose existence is occasioned by the world in which they live. Opinions differ however as to the form that the servanthood should take and as to the relationship between ecclesia and world.

There are also some strong differences of opinion especially in the matter of the nature of mission. Some see it as the humanisation of society in which the full potential of man will be realisable, that is to say, a changed society will result in a change of men. Others however are equally insistent that the process should be seen in the reverse - that is, changed men will gradually change the society. The work of the Division of World Mission and Evangelism of the W.C.C. is temporarily held up while this issue is being debated. The situation up to the debate in the January issue of the International Review of Mission (1971) has already been noted. A further meeting of members of the Division will be held in 1972 in an effort to reach some constructive resolution of the problem. This particular debate, as mentioned earlier arises from differing understandings of the terms ecclesia, world, salvation etc., and in turn hinges on the prior questions of authority and interpretation of Scripture. The fact that Faith and Order discussions have proceeded independently in W.C.C. activities from Mission and Evangelism discussions has contributed in part to the present difficulty. (There is however a growing body of opinion, as noted in the comments on "New Directions in American Theology" which tends to regard theological reflection as unproductive and looks rather to praxis as the source of understanding.) The situation has now been reached where there is growing unanimity in Faith and Order as a result of careful biblical studies but the application of these insights to the question of Mission is being frustrated

by what can be best described as the existentialistic approach on the part of many concerned with mission. Whether the W.C.C. can draw these two strands together in a fruitful confrontation remains a question for the future.

A second area of tension, but ultimately springing from the same source, is that concerning the need and nature of the ordained ministry as it has been known in the major denominations of the West. Whilst it has been accepted as the sine qua non of the ecclesia in the most recent plans of union, there is a growing body of writers who are pressing for a radical solution to this problem along the lines of Roland Allen's proposals. The whole question of ministry, in their view, needs to be reconsidered in the light of the secular world situation. At the root of this disagreement is the problem as to whether the historical expediences (hierarchical episcopacy) must now be regarded as normative rather than the N.T. patterns. There is yet no indication that this problem is being faced in a responsible way in W.C.C. or denominational circles. Hoekendijk, van den Heuvel and others have been pressing for a rethinking of this matter but there is little evidence that they are being heeded. The question is not primarily whether the three-tier order of bishop, presbyter, deacon is essential or even desirable, but rather how the development of the ministry of the whole laos may be achieved.

Chapter 5

THE RECOVERY OF EFFECTIVENESS

Introduction

In the previous chapter representative views for the renewal of the ecclesia in its mission have been reviewed and the several trends in thinking evaluated. Earlier chapters have shown both the Biblical characteristics of the ecclesia as the people of God and those exhibited in the ecclesia in history at times when it has been effective in its influence in the world. In furtherance of the thesis of this essay that the ecclesia was intended to be an effective instrument in the mission of God today it is now necessary to draw together the various clues and to apply them to the current denominational situation. A detailed blueprint cannot be given by reason of space limitation and the differences between the structures of the denominations - therefore what follows will deal with the principal areas in which a re-formation of thinking and action must take place if effectiveness is to be achieved.

In Chapter three it was shown that the people of God have penetrated the world and extended their influence in it under conditions that would seem to be humanly impossible. The survey showed that under conditions of extreme class distinction, oppression and injustice, the ecclesia had not only grown but also brought about in due time, alleviation or amelioration of these social conditions as well as giving hope and newness of life to countless thousands. Not even official persecution or mob violence prevented this growth and

spread of vital Christianity - in fact it may be said that indirectly it helped to do so because of the witness and testimony of believers in the face of persecution and personal suffering. Whilst most renewal movements grew out of a response amongst the least privileged groups of society they were by no means restricted to such groups, but encompassed all classes of men and women. It was shown too that at such times the ecclesia tended to conform to the general population distribution of age and sex in its membership and could be truly called a cross-section of humanity. Paul's words about the ecclesia not including many wise and many mighty men by worldly standards (I Cor. 1:26) were both a recognition of the distribution of power and wealth in the hands of relatively few people in the community as well as an interpretation of the fact that the Gospel is for all people regardless of position in life. (A corollary to the above conclusion is that in times of decline the ecclesia shows marked non-representative characteristics as far as the community is concerned - this is patently obvious today).

In regard to the decline that is observed at different times in the history of the ecclesia it may be said that this is typical of the tendency for all human organisations to decline in their standards of performance and to become less differentiated from the surrounding population. This degeneration follows a "law" that has been observed by sociologists and has been described by Katz and Kahn in "The Social Psychology of Organisations", Wiley 1966. It follows the well-known second law of thermodynamics and its

application to social organisations was first suggested by Norbert Wiener of Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The law states that, in the absence of external energy supplies the degree of internal organisation and specialisation of a group decreases with time, that is, entropy or disorganisation increases. Therefore an organisation with a high degree of negative entropy is one that is highly specialised and differentiated and therefore effective in its functions. In the absence of the influence of the Spirit of God in the denominations, providing the renewing and enabling energy, the entropy of the ecclesia as an institution increases until it becomes barely distinguishable in behaviour from the rest of the community. This is displayed in the Old Testament $\Theta \rightarrow \Lambda$, where, for example, the prophet Amos had to warn the people of their decline from the law of God - "woe to them that are at ease in Zion" (Amos 6:1, see also Is. 32:11). The whole history of Israel displays a continuing cycle of backsliding due to syncretism and rationalisation followed by repentance and then renewal by God. The history of the new people of Israel displays the same pattern of decline followed by revival brought about by the Holy Spirit either as a mass movement, as in the evangelical revivals, or through small groups or individuals.

From the lack of reference to this dynamic of the Spirit in most of the recent writings on the Church and its mission, it seems clear that it is either being denied as a vital aspect of Mission or else that such experience is lacking on the part of the writers. This is in strong contrast to the

writings of the N.T. and those periods of the life of the ecclesia that were studied in Chapter two. The transformation that took place in the lives of ordinary people compelled them to witness to the God that had brought it to pass. If through the power of the Spirit men have been born anew, then they will, on the basis of the evidence, seek to exalt this God who by His Spirit has brought such a transformation about (Ps. 51:15) and to speak of the power of His Spirit.

In Chapter four we noted that several writers spoke of the need of the ecclesia to manifest in itself the life of the new creation, at least in part, so as to validate the trustworthiness of the proclamation of the ecclesia. However there was a complete lack of any discussion as to how this new creation came about or any description as to the way in which this new quality of life manifested itself. The examples of mission that were given in "The Church For Others" showed no evidence that this was the work of the Spirit through the ecclesia as distinct from the works of any other group of men. In contrast, when Jesus moved about Galilee, His works, so he declared, pointed to an irruption of the power of God in the midst of men. The quality of His life and actions called men to decision - either they were for Him or they were against Him. So too, the first Christians were a challenge to the world because they were enabled by the Spirit of God - their lives validated the message they proclaimed.

One of the great needs of the day is a recovery of the biblical understanding of the work of the Spirit in the

believer and in the ecclesia as well as the experience of that enabling. Berkhoff deals in a preliminary fashion with the question of the work of the Spirit and indicates the direction which he considers further investigation must take.¹ He speaks of a third gift, as distinct from regeneration and sanctification, which is the filling of the Spirit or the effect of the Spirit in the individual. Acknowledging that he is setting his "foot on an unexplored field and that my thoughts -- must be considered as preliminary and needing correction by others" he seeks to take the Lukan and Pauline views of the subject and find a synthesis to describe the result of the charismata for edifying the Church and enabling it for mission in the world.

On the conservative side, the Pentecostals emphasise the external manifestation of the gift of the Spirit rather than the purpose of the gifts. The Interdenominationalists speak more of the work of the Spirit in bringing about the maturity of the believer, enabling him to live victoriously over sin and to serve God by the complete dedication of his life to His Mission (The Keswick Teaching). Others speak only vaguely about the fruit of the Spirit as love and of His work in incorporating the believer into the ecclesia but are silent about what Berkhoff terms the third gift. The present lack of agreement and understanding concerning the work of the Spirit not only results in a deep mistrust between the various groups but also leads one group to emphasise the

1. Berkhof, H. "The Doctrine of The Holy Spirit", pp.75-93, John Knox, Virginia 1964.

gifts (glossolalia) and another to emphasise the sacraments and omit reference to the enabling of the Spirit. The consequences of the first aberration have already been alluded to briefly - the gift rather than the Giver is sought with a consequent lack of concern for the whole counsel and purposes of God. The consequences of the second view are that the sacraments tend to be exalted to a place where they are considered to have a mechanical efficacy. There follows from this view great concern about specifying their exact handling and of deciding who is permitted to dispense them. The Holy Spirit is left to attend upon the works of man! Worse still, the practical effect, as can be observed from denominations and sections of them that teach this view, is that the members tend to attend upon the sacrament and very little else, thus making it a spiritual insurance policy (of doubtful value).

There is an urgent need for the denominations to explore from a biblical point of view what the work of the Spirit in the believer and in the ecclesia really is, both in order to avoid the excesses of some of the Pentecostals and the sacramentalists as well as to draw each other together in closer spiritual fellowship. The hope of du-Plessis² that glossolalia as a manifestation of the baptism of the Spirit will penetrate and revive the older denominations can hardly succeed in the light of careful biblical studies. However, the regaining of a more balanced view might well lead to a reduction of the present antipathies, to a growing cooperation

2. du-Plessis "The Spirit Bade Me Go" p.28f, Oakland (undated)

in mission and a mutual spiritual enrichment. Dunn³ has suggested how this could be approached, but has not as yet dealt with the manifestation of the coming and presence of the Spirit in the believer.

A Correct World View

The term "world" is here used as the translation for the biblical word "kosmos" and especially for the Johanne usage of the word. That is, it refers to the totality of mankind as the human race, its patterns of living, its standards of behaviour and its power to induce conformity to these mores. As shown in Chapter two the biblical use of the word kosmos is generally concerned with the behaviour and attitude of unregenerate mankind. Out of this mankind God calls a people to be His people to serve and glorify Him amongst mankind and to be the instrument of His purpose to the remainder of mankind. It is therefore important that the relationship between God and the world and the ecclesia and the world be correctly determined. It was pointed out in Chapter 4 that underlying much of the recent W.C.C. material was the implicit theological understanding that in Christ God has redeemed all men and therefore since the Crucifixion all men are recipients of God's blessings, i.e. that there is no essential difference between the world and the ecclesia. This view was specifically rejected by many German Theologians in the Frankfurt Declaration on the

3. Dunn, J.D.G. "Baptism in the Holy Spirit", p.224ff. SCM, London 1970.

Fundamental Crisis in Christian Mission (March 1970)⁴ who said that they "repudiated the universalistic idea that in Christ all men of all times are already born again and already have peace with Him irrespective of their knowledge of the historical saving activity of God or their belief in it. Through such a misconception the evangelistic commission loses both its full authoritative power and its urgency. Unconverted men are thereby lulled into a fateful sense of security about their eternal destiny". (element 4 of mission). The Declaration goes on to speak of unbelief which through its rejection of the offer of salvation leads to damnation. In this statement mankind (the world) is seen as under the judgement of God rather than enjoying His benediction.

The understanding displayed in the ecclesia during its times of extension, in which the world (mankind) was seen as opposed to God in its self-centredness and thereby under His judgement, and from which men were to be called in repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, coincides with the biblical material that was discussed in Chapter two. The Reformation confessions and the statements of faith of the inter-denominational movements of today also agree with this view of the world. The terminology used has and indeed must change with the development and the usage of language and with the major problems that confront man in the different periods of history. (For example, in a sexually permissive society it becomes necessary to redefine the biblical word 'agape' in fresh terms for the English word 'love' has lost

4. "The Frankfurt Declaration" March 1970. English translation printed in, amongst others, "One World, One Task" p.161ff Scripture Union, London 1971.

its power to comprehend the biblical meaning.) However the basic understanding of the condition of mankind as alienated from God through sin and needing the redemptive power of God in response to their faith to save them from judgement and to renew them in this present life must be preserved in our modern thought forms. Man's need remains unchanged as does the basic commission of the Ecclesia to proclaim God's remedy for that need.

But man is more than "a soul with two ears" and the command to preach the Gospel of God's grace is accompanied with the command to "love ones neighbour" and to "do good to those that despitefully use you". The Frankfurt Declaration therefore affirms that the "determined advocacy of justice and peace by all churches" and "assistance for development" is both the accompaniment and the verification of the proclamation of the Gospel. As was seen in Chapter three, this has always been the case to a greater or lesser degree during the times of effectiveness of the ecclesia. The task of evangelism is always primary for there is always a new generation of mankind to whom the Gospel must be proclaimed in word and deed. There may be varying degrees of need for social justice and reconciliation but there will always be individual needy people to whom the ecclesia must minister in the name of Christ. In the face of material plenty and a high degree of social justice in many places of the West, the continuing fears and animosities of men indicate that it is not material possessions or even justice that are man's primary needs but rather the experience of the forgiveness, love and grace of God.

The insistence in "The Church For Others" and "The Church Inside Out" that the ecclesia exists for the world and is to be controlled by the world as it seeks to bring justice and reconciliation to pass, has been a necessary corrective to much of the self-centredness of the ecclesia in the past but it has over-carried and resulted in a gross misunderstanding of the real situation. The criticism is nevertheless a salutary reminder to the ecclesia that it exists to serve the world as part of the Missio Dei and not its own aggrandisement.

As indicated in Chapter two the world has to be recognised as the community of mankind which is destined to perish even though it stands confident in its ability to determine its own destiny. Yet it is this same world which is the object of God's love and which He sent His Son to redeem. It is mankind which God does not will to perish but desires to come to repentance and serve and Honour Him (2 Pet. 3:9). It is the world which, in the sin of its independence of its Creator, God seeks through the agency of His people. It is the world that has lost its way and needs to be called back to the Way by the ecclesia. No mission can be effective until these characteristics of the world are acknowledged.

In considering the needs of the world it is also important to distinguish between man's true nature and his inherited accumulation of knowledge and "know-how" about the planet on which he lives. Whilst man has great ability to manipulate his physical environment to suit himself and more limited ability to manipulate his fellow beings, there is no

recorded evidence that this has resulted in any change in his moral nature. (This is corroborated indirectly by the ability of "stone-age peoples" to bridge the so-called culture gap in one and at most two generations in the mission fields of the world.) The description of man in Romans 1 and 2 is still true in 1971 in spite of the scientific developments of the intervening centuries. Research in the social sciences has gathered a great deal of information about man's behaviour both individually and collectively but there is no evidence that man is able to use this knowledge to permanently overcome fear, guilt and loneliness.⁵ Mankind is still the same needy creature for whom Christ came and to whom He alone can give newness of life. The Ecclesia then has to return to a proper understanding of the world and its ways and needs and what it means to be in the world but not of it, before it can be useful in the *Missio Dei*. Without such a clear understanding it will become embroiled in the ways of the world and lose its way, - it will cease to be the light to the world and the salt to flavour it. More importantly, as the Frankfurt Declaration affirmed, it will leave the world with a false assurance of its own safety and future.

A Correct View of the Ecclesia

As we noted in Chapter two, the ecclesia does not belong to the world but is composed of those who have been translated

5. See the criticisms of the counselling processes by Halmos, P. in "The Faith of the Counsellors" Constable, London 1965.

from the world to the Kingdom of His Beloved Son (Col. 1:13). Such a definition immediately lays an infinite distinction between the two and cuts across many of the contemporary views of the nature of the ecclesia. The church is not merely that part of the world which knows its true relationship to God in contrast to that which does not, or which has a specific function to perform on behalf of the world; rather, it is a community which has been called out of the world and renewed by God and which has a service to perform to the world. Biblically, between the Church and the world there is a complete disjunction - they are two separate realms or kingdoms (in the sense discussed in Chapter 2). This discontinuity is represented in terms of New Birth, - of dying to the old nature and rising to new life in Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit. Without this clear differentiation in mind, the nature of mission and even of the life of the ecclesia will remain confused and energy will be dissipated uselessly. To say this is not to deny that the ecclesia is known as a community or society of men, but simply to indicate that it is not to be identified as part of the world.

In Chapter four it was pointed out that much current thinking about the nature and mission of the ecclesia was derived from what has been called "incarnational theology" which sees the ecclesia simply as being a suffering and servant church. As Christ came to minister and to suffer for others, so the ecclesia is to follow the pattern of its master. This partial view is rejected by the Frankfurt

Declaration which stated, (section 3), "we likewise reject the unbiblical limitation of the person and work of Jesus to His humanity and ethical example. In such an idea the uniqueness of Christ and the Gospel is abandoned in favour of humanitarian principle which others might find in other religions and ideologies". The emphasis on the servant nature of the ecclesia has been another necessary corrective to those views which maintained either a withdrawn separation between the ecclesia and the world or else saw the ecclesia as called to lord it over the world. Unfortunately this newer view is only a partial one and will lead, if followed, to equally dangerous distortions of mission through the ecclesia being merged into the world. Effectiveness in Mission cannot be regained until a biblically complete view of the nature of the ecclesia is regained. If through the incarnation the servant-hood of the ecclesia must be recognised, then through the resurrection and ascension the right to rule must also be recognised and therefore the right and responsibility to proclaim the Gospel on behalf of the Lord and King.

A further area in which the ecclesia needs to regain a proper understanding is in regard to its own intrinsic nature as a community of the Spirit. Again, as was seen in the previous chapter, biblical studies have brought a much needed correction to the view of the ecclesia as simply an institution. (The term institution is taken here in the sense of having a legal constitution and corporate entity which is secured in time by a duly approved and orderly

succession of officers). The nature of the ecclesia as a community brought into being by the Spirit, has to become the basis of talking about the ecclesia. Williams'⁶ comment about the ecclesia as "event" helps to capture the reality of the idea of Spirit-formed community. It is a free life that is constantly created as men are freed by the Spirit from the drifting self-centred form of "natural worldly life" and incorporated into the ecclesia. An institutional aspect is necessary for the ecclesia but it cannot be created or maintained by institutional organisation. The danger of the institutional view is that it so formalises and regulates the life of the ecclesia that the Spirit of God is denied His freedom and the decisions of men become substituted for the will of God. In fact the organisational jacket may contain no spiritual body at all. The writings of Roman Catholic and Anglican theologians have shown how both these denominations need to get away from the institutional views that have long dominated their thinking. The Reformed denominations have also tended in the same direction of hardening on a particular institutional form of the ecclesia and need to return to the biblical view of the freedom of the Spirit who is able to use a variety of forms for His purposes. This is not to suggest an understanding of the ecclesia that eschews any formal pattern but rather one that accepts a variety of patterns and places emphasis on the leading of the Spirit to direct as He wills and relies on the evidences of the gifts

6. Williams, C. "New Directions in Theology, 4, - The Church" p.34ff. Lutterworth, London 1969.

of the Spirit as the basis for apostolic continuity rather than on formal authorisation. Brunner has pointed out that the pure community of the Spirit does not exist and for various reasons some degree of institutionalism must be accepted today. Further, in its relation with the world some form of institutionalism is needed, for this is the way of the world. For example, the laws relating to the holding of property require a "legally constituted" body for this purpose whether it be the ecclesia or private persons. What has been said earlier does not therefore mean that all institutional forms have to be discarded but rather that they should be made secondary to the life and mission of the ecclesia to ensure that they do not become a hindrance to rather than a vehicle of the working of the Spirit.

Communion has been defined or described by some as the sacrament of unity and therefore much discussion on union has centred on the possibility of intercommunion between denominations. Great difficulty has been experienced at this point because of problems of recognition of ministerial orders. However, amongst the interdenominational groups there has never been any difficulty in this area - they have joined together for the sacrament regardless of the persons presiding - usually several and often unordained. Although those participating have come from various denominational backgrounds this has not prevented them from sharing together in the sacrament as an expression that they are indeed all one in Christ Jesus. The purpose of this example is not primarily to suggest that denominational differences are unimportant

but rather to indicate the nature of the community of the Spirit and show that there can still be genuine unity in spite of diverse views or understandings about structures and ministry. Diversity of order is one of the characteristics of the ecclesia as was emphasised by Mackie who said⁷ " --diversity appears as a basic characteristic of churches as it is of human beings. No universal patterns can therefore be drawn without abstracting the reality of individual churches. It is not our concern to draw out the theological implications of this consideration. We believe however that it has been inadequately considered by theologians in their study of ecclesiology". The reality of this diversity should dissuade the denominations from seeking to make an ecclesiastical strait-jacket to encompass everybody in "One Church". They could well succeed in so doing but there is no guarantee that what resulted would be the ecclesia of God. Fortunately this point seems to be gaining recognition in some places. -

McClelland⁸ proposes a Federation of denominations to achieve unity in Mission whilst allowing diversity of form. W.C.C. documents tend now to speak more about unity in mission rather than organic union of the denominations.

Mission

It was claimed earlier that a recovery of the biblical understanding of the world will lead to a proper understanding of the Missio Dei as involving proclamation, Witness and

7. Mackie, S.G. "Can the Churches be Compared" p.88ff, W.C.C., New York 1970.

8. McClelland, J. "Toward a Radical Church" p.79f. Ryerson, Toronto 1967.

service. There is no stereotyped form in which the mission is to be carried out. The book of Acts recounts a wide variety of situations in which the Gospel was proclaimed - from the Philippian gaol to the market square of Athens. Witness was borne to the works of God in Christ and to the need to repent and believe on Him. The message was proclaimed at mass meetings, small gatherings and to individuals. The audience was either gathered for the express purpose of hearing one of the evangelists or else circumstances provided the audience. Every opportunity was taken to make the 'good news' known. Multitudes responded as the Holy Spirit used the testimony and the preaching of the members of the ecclesia.

It has already been argued earlier that every member of the ecclesia is engaged in mission, but it now needs to be ascertained how this is to be done in the twentieth century. It has also been made clear that mission involves good works, whether individual acts of mercy or concerted efforts for social justice, as well as proclamation by word, but the proclamation has primary importance. Although it is clear from the N.T. that some people received the charismata for evangelism, which was apparently a continuous form of itinerant preaching (e.g. Paul), it is also clear that all believers were involved in witnessing and testifying to their Lord (Acts 1:8), and all were expected to be able to give a reasonable account of their faith (2 Pet. 3:15). All were so to live that the quality of their lives drew the attention of those around them (Matt. 5:16, Phil. 4:5). This way of

living was to be manifest in all parts of a man's life - there was to be no distinction between times and places - all of life was to be lived to the glory of God. Their life was not primarily to be pleasing to men but to the God who had redeemed them (Rom. 12:1), nevertheless it was to be lived amongst men and for men. The neighbour in need was the one to whom loving service was to be rendered.

It has sometimes been suggested that a man's work is the place where he shares in Mission in the world - that it must be seen as a divine vocation. Work, from the biblical point of view, is not a blessing to man as far as it concerns his means of livelihood. Through the Fall all men are involved in toil and labour, for it is only by work that man is able to eat. Christians are expected to work to earn their own living and that of their family but all this is to be done as to God rather than earthly masters. In honesty, diligence and application they are to be beyond reproach. This does not mean that a Christian is necessarily a better potter, farmer or overseer than a non-Christian, in so far as actual skill is concerned, but it does mean that he is entirely trustworthy and reliable. It is not possible for all men to find jobs that are mentally and emotionally satisfying and in which they can use their Christian insights to the full, for many are forced in industrial as well as rural societies to perform tasks that admit of no personal initiative (e.g. assembly line workers and drain diggers.) It is not possible therefore to speak of all Christians as being engaged in mission in their work for there is no difference between

their work and that same work being done by a non-Christian. If the ecclesia is to speak of work in terms of a Christian vocation then it must be primarily in terms that have to do with personal relations between the Christian and his fellow-workers rather than in regard to the actual work that is done. Many men are compelled to work at jobs that by their nature allow no scope for Christian insight or witness. Others may have opportunity as teachers, social workers, youth workers etc., to bring a particularly Christian interpretation and style to their jobs but these do not make up the bulk of jobs. The Christian vocation and witness must therefore be seen primarily in the quality of personal living, - honesty, reliability, freedom from concern about prestige and financial gain etc., and the relationships established with others - helpfulness, cooperation etc. In some other occupations, vocation will involve in addition, the application of specific Christian insights to the work.

With the increasing productivity of the Western nations, man's employment occupies less of his time and he is left with more and more leisure. He has consequently an increasingly greater opportunity for a Christian ministry outside of his working hours. This part-time ministry may include sunday-school and youth work, visitation evangelism, hospital visitation, inter-church mission council work and so on. For many people this will be the main opportunity which they have for Christian ministry or service. This kind of ministry also allows the best use of abilities within the ecclesia and makes available greater manpower for the total mission of

the local congregation. Within the congregation members will help each other with their individual witness and in the application of biblical insights to the problems they come against. Individually and corporately they will be engaged in witness and service in their local area. Through their giving and prayers they will be involved in the wider mission of the ecclesia.

From the corporate point of view the ecclesia has to engage in the service of the world through the relief of needs and the seeking of justice for the oppressed and dispossessed. More importantly however, it has to actively proclaim the Gospel in the world. It is not sufficient to proclaim it in a service of worship or through the celebration of the sacraments for this is not proclamation to the world. The command to go into all the world and announce the Gospel still stands. Communication of information and the invitation to respond are the biblical form of proclamation of the Gospel. Today this may involve person to person communication or the use of some means of multiplying the message such as radio, T.V., or the printed word. It is in these areas of written and aural proclamation that the denominations have largely failed to discharge their mission. Bible translation, production and distribution has been left in the main to groups of inter-denominational societies which have operated independently of and without much support from the denominations. (Most denominations are not officially represented on the Councils of the Bible Societies for example.) Radio and T.V. have usually been used for services of worship and the

discussion of problems rather than for evangelism. These means of evangelism have therefore been left to inter-denominational groups and some of the very small denominations. (The Lutheran Church of America and some individual congregations in Europe are notable exceptions to this statement but the general force of the criticism still stands.) Paul's willingness to be all things for all men in order that he might save some (I Cor. 9:22) must still be the standard by which the ecclesia seeks to proclaim the Gospel to the world - every media and every means must be exploited to the utmost.

It is not inferred that radio and T.V. are the only or the most effective means of evangelism. In fact, a recent survey carried out by the Evangelical Alliance⁹ showed that radio and T.V. were by far the least effective means of winning men and women for Christ - personal contact and witness headed the list. As the study was done in England the result may only reflect on the material that had been presented on these media rather than on the media themselves. On the other hand, religious films made with the express intent of evangelism, also failed in the survey to show much greater effectiveness than radio and T.V.. Personal witness and testimony, either within the family or amongst friends, was by far the most effective means for the proclamation of the Gospel. Unfortunately there was no examination in the report as to whether radio and film material had predisposed people to heed personal contacts.

9. Evangelical Alliance "The Other Side - A Report on Evangelism" Scripture Union, London 1970.

Whilst the dissemination of the Gospel by the mass media is an important responsibility of the ecclesia which must not be overlooked it has nevertheless to be regarded as ancillary to the main method of evangelism by personal contact. Individual responsibility in this regard was partially discussed earlier when dealing with witness at work. This witness must also take place at home and amongst friends as the opportunity presents itself. However there is a corporate responsibility on the part of the ecclesia which has to be discharged through contact with people in the neighbourhood. Individual committed Christians will only contact a small fraction of the population of an area through their work or sporting or social contacts, and to rely on this approach alone would mean that large numbers of people would remain unchallenged by the Christian Gospel. Therefore there is need for an organised approach to evangelism in the neighbourhood through visitation evangelism or its equivalent in which the members of the ecclesia systematically cover the neighbourhood either on a congregational basis or in cooperation with other congregations. It has also to be remembered that this is not a "once only" outreach for there is always a new generation of young people to be contacted and new arrivals to the community who need to hear the Gospel and be challenged to respond to Jesus Christ.

Various congregations have instituted visitation evangelism programs on a regular basis and have found that not only have many people been led to loyalty to Christ and His service but also the fellowship within the congregation has been deepened.

The Presbyterian Church of Coral Ridge in Florida has added 2000 members in nine years through such a program.¹⁰ At this point it must be made clear that the denominations must differentiate between visitation work that is congregation-centred and aimed primarily at increasing the membership roll and true evangelism which is aimed at leading persons to faith in Jesus Christ. Only the latter has biblical sanction. Many people have felt that this cannot be done by the ordinary members and that the main visitation goal is to get the people to the worship service where the minister will preach the gospel to them. This view is quite contrary to the N.T. and historical evidence. The committed, mature member is quite able to carry out this task relying on the enabling of the Holy Spirit in this vital aspect of mission. Converts or serious enquirers will come to the congregational meeting as a matter of course for further instruction and fellowship. Until the denominations give up the slogan "come to church" in favour of the slogan "come to Jesus Christ" they will never be effective in mission. There needs, therefore, to be a recovery of the understanding that evangelism means both informing and challenging people under the commission of the Lord of the Church. This will only come as there is a recovery of the understanding of the needs of the world and of the experience of the power of the Holy Spirit to work miracles of renewal in the lives of ordinary men and women. The techniques for this kind of evangelism are well documented, what is needed is the recovery of a proper understanding of

10. See the Report in "Christianity Today" July 18, 1969, p.32.

the nature of the *Missio Dei*.

The discussion to date has centred around local mission. But the Gospel is for the whole world as well. What has been termed Home Mission in many places concerns the needs of a country as a whole or a particular area of it. This is always a pressing concern for the ecclesia as there are always people in new housing developments who need to be evangelised. As most of the work has to be done vicariously through other people, the local ecclesia has to keep people fully informed of the needs, the progress and the specific problems of mission so that there can be informed prayer and giving to the work. Too often the denominations have been content to levy a charge on each congregation for this wider work whilst leaving the members of the congregation virtually uninformed about the work. As a result they have become financially and prayerfully disinterested. The problem of adequate communication is a big one but it has to be solved if the ecclesia are to be again effective in mission. (The same problem exists for the interdenominational societies in keeping their supporters fully up to date with the work.) Part of the solution is the development of maturity amongst the members of the fellowship but the other part is careful and extensive communication and publicity. What has been said of "Home Mission" applies with the same force to "Overseas Mission" regardless of the exact form which that takes.

As the responsibility for mission rests with the individual believer-in-Christ, he should have the possibility of not only participating in mission himself in the local area but also,

through representatives and agents, in other places of the world. Therefore the structures of the denomination and the congregation should be so ordered that he not only receives all the information he needs for prayerful and financial support of mission but can also express his views and suggestions regarding mission. In other words he should have some real, even if rather remote, say in the formulation of plans and the administration of mission. Too often however denominational polity denies the local member this possibility because there is not true representation in the committees or agencies of the denomination, as the members of those committees are not obliged to seek the views of the members of the congregation or to represent those views in the deliberations of the committees. (This is especially true of the ordained clergy). As a result the member feels isolated from the decisions and tends to lose interest in the work which in turn means that his stewardship of time and money will suffer or it will find another channel outside the denomination. In such instances any denominational demand for increased support will receive less than the hearing it deserves. The COCU Plan of Union has attempted to ensure genuine representation for members in the mission of the ecclesia, but the point needs to be recognised in all denominations, and appropriate steps taken to ensure that all members can have a say in mission.

It is clear, in the interests of good stewardship of resources, that wherever possible there should be cooperation in mission between denominations at a local and a national level. There can of course be no full cooperation where there

is a different understanding of the nature of mission, nevertheless coordination and recognition of each others activities is vital to prevent misunderstanding and conflict.

The Life of The Ecclesia

Only the most significant aspects can be touched on here and therefore the discussion is confined to those areas in greatest need of re-thinking in the denominations. The threefold aspect of koinonia was dealt with in earlier chapters. The vertical aspect, of sharing in Christ, is generally agreed on by most writers, but needs to be emphasised in the teaching ministry of the ecclesia. The second aspect, or sharing with each other, has also been referred to earlier, but must now be elaborated on for it is basic to renewal for mission. The third aspect or sharing in mission, has already been discussed.

The koinonia of the believers with one another was considered at some length in the previous chapter in the discussion on small groups. There is growing recognition of the need for koinonia within the ecclesia but there is as yet no widespread understanding of how this is brought about and the important part it plays in the development of spiritual maturity. The phrase "growing up into Christ" is used frequently in modern writings but there is normally little indication of what this means in terms of daily living. The impression is almost given that it happens automatically as a gift of the Spirit.¹¹ This view contrasts with the understanding

11. See Williams comment p.63 in "New Directions in Theology, 4, The Church" Op.cit.

of the N.T. writers who were vitally concerned with the problem because some of the people were not growing in their understanding and Christian life, both individually and corporately. (First Peter (2:2) speaks of some of the believers being still spiritual babes and not ready to receive the maturer teachings.)

Perhaps the closest secular illustration that can be given to illustrate this growing process is the craft apprenticeship. A young man is attached to a craftsman for a period of up to four or five years, in order that he may not only understand the reasons for all that is done and the best way of doing it, but, more importantly, he may learn to be practically competent in the trade and become a skilled craftsman himself. It is essentially a system of craftsman reproduction, which involves learning and doing, coupled with reproof, guidance, demonstration and encouragement so that the final product may be worthy of the craft. This same pattern of apprenticeship is clearly delineated in the New Testament and is instituted by the command "to make disciples of all nations, teaching them to observe all the things....I have commanded you", (Matt. 28:19,20). Paul speaks of the work of diakonia (ministry) as being part of the Divinely provided and ordained means by which believers are to be trained and encouraged in the Christian life and be imitators of Christ (Eph. 4:11-16) in deeds. 'Instant' Christian maturity is unknown in the New Testament. Years after the beginning of some of the ecclesia, and even amongst those with whom Paul had laboured many months, there was still a

deplorable lack of understanding and a maturity of Christian life (e.g. 1 Corinthians). It is not only a question of gaining knowledge but also of achieving understanding and practical competence. As an apprentice may not understand the reasons or the significance of some things that he is told to do in the early months of his apprenticeship, so too the new disciple of Christ may not and indeed usually cannot understand the full reasons for certain ways of living. Yet, as he practices these, he is able on the basis of practical experience and the study of the Scriptures to understand the wisdom and the perfection of these instructions and so prepare himself for further learning and increased usefulness by God.

Jesus Christ is the 'blue-print' for the believer's life; and maturity involves growing up into that likeness. To achieve this purpose the Spirit has given charismata to the members of the ecclesia in order that they may accomplish this function through sharing with one another and encouraging one another. The small group is the place where this can take place most effectively. Tanburn¹² and Richards¹³ discuss this aspect in some detail and describe the conditions that must exist for growth to take place. In the sharing of understandings and experiences, the members minister to one another according to the charisma they have received. In planning and acting in mission together in the community they are able to interpret and develop their understandings of the Christian life and this in turn influences and deepens their

12. Tanburn, J. "Open House" p.61ff. Falcon, London 1970.

13. Richards, L. "A New Face For The Church" Zondervan, Grand Rapids 1970.

understanding of mission.

An alternative form of fellowship for learning is the practice of "discipling" in which a mature, experienced Christian, meets with a new Christian for prayer and bible study and works with him in evangelistic or teaching work for a period of six months to a year. At the end of the time, the disciple is expected to become a teacher in turn to a new Christian. Whilst the process has dangers in that it can become stereotyped and mechanical, and whilst, without other fellowship activities it could restrict the mutual edifying of all believers, yet it is an effective attempt to develop the maturity of the new Christians and at the same time to utilise the resources of the total membership of the ecclesia. Above all, it is a practical solution to the problem of the time required to carry out the training process. One ordained clergyman could not hope to cope on such a basis with more than a few, perhaps a dozen, people. Yet fifty members could easily look after fifty 'learners' on a part-time basis.

The concept of learning by doing is well attested in educational experience. It is exploited in Pentecostalism, - where every new convert is immediately involved in practical service and in the Salvation Army, where every soldier is required to serve in practical ways. By way of contrast, the main Western Protestant denominations have allowed members to remain passive hearers and as a consequence have suffered in that the members have become frozen rather than mobile assets. No recovery in mission effectiveness can come

until practical steps are taken to implement training for maturity, either in properly organised groups or in more personal one-to-one relationships. The recovery of the concept of learning by doing, especially for adults, is vital to the development of mature Christians.

Two other related matters must now be examined. Firstly, there needs to be some generally agreed minimum standard of maturity which all believers should be expected to attain. The suggestion of a standard does not conflict with what has been said earlier about the charismatic gifts of the Spirit, for it has to do with aspects of personal behaviour and attitudes rather than forms of service. Following the New Testament picture of the early Christians, it could be said that each believer was expected (rather, each desired) to have fellowship daily with God and with fellow believers, (Acts 2:4). The second of these may not be possible in suburbia today (although it is common practice in newly developing ecclesia in mission situations) but at least it would be expected that members would meet once a week for worship and say two other times a month for study and service. Daily personal prayer and Bible study would be normal. Professed loyalty to Jesus Christ and to His service would be expected and would be shown by participation in the mission of the congregation and the denomination. A willingness to witness and testify to others of his Christian experience, to show hospitality to the 'brethren' and to any in need, to have a good understanding of the faith "once delivered to the saints" would also be considered normal requirements. Whether this particular list

is acceptable or not, is unimportant, - what is important is that there be some minimum standard to which it is expected every member will attain and surpass. Without a standard there is no means of assessing a programme of maturation or of deciding the most suitable means of training. Such a standard has nothing to do necessarily with membership requirements of a congregation in which professed faith in Christ and loyalty to His Church (in its local manifestation) and willingness to learn of Him are all that are required.

The second matter concerns the way in which the Christian faith is to be understood. For new members, at the beginning of their discipling stage, there is need for a clear, unambiguous and easily understood statement of the nature of the Christian life and the main teachings of the Scriptures. (This was one of the main features of the early Methodism and the Salvation Army and some Pentecostal groups.) As members grow in maturity through reading and study of the Scriptures, through sharing in the fellowship of the ecclesia and through their experience in serving Jesus Christ in their daily lives, so they come to recognise the rightness of such a statement and eventually to outgrow the need of one at all. The statement gives them a prop to rely on whilst they are growing in understanding and grace in order that they may not stumble. Generalised number theory is not taught to pupils in primary school - instead they are given useful rules and simple explanations to enable them to get on with doing mathematics - number theory follows at tertiary level. The Reformation Confessional statements not only set out to clarify the

theological issues of the time, but also to give such a guide to believers as has been suggested. The Catechisms, whatever else may be said against them as a learning method, did provide a framework in which the Christian could grow in understanding until he no longer needed it. The present tendency in Western Protestantism, unlike Catholicism, to do away with catechisms and to reduce the statements of the faith to the Apostles and Nicene Creeds (usually in the interests of Union or simplifying Church discipline as far as ministers are concerned) is therefore a step in the wrong direction. There will undoubtedly be great difficulty at this present time of theological dispute and uncertainty, in preparing such a statement within the present denominational structures, but until it is done, very many of the members of congregations will remain unable to take real steps to maturity. Such statements are not a substitute for but rather a complement to the learning within the fellowship. The preparation of statements of faith and life might undoubtedly produce a regrouping of people along doctrinal rather than current denominational lines, but this would be preferable to the current paralysis of the denominations.

Leadership

Leadership of the small groups may depend on circumstances. It may be a trained man of the type that Hanson called the pioneer minister who has been sent to develop an ecclesia or one out of a group of Christians who meet for fellowship and who has a recognisable charisma for leading such a group in its studies and activities. In the case of a congregation,

which may consist of many such small groups, leadership and direction poses several different problems from that of the small group alone. Firstly there is need to allow for full utilisation of all the charismata of the congregation and to move away from the concept that one man, suitably trained and ordained can hope to provide all the necessary abilities. As indicated in the earlier sections there is need for a genuine corporate oversight and direction by a group of men fitted for this work or ministry. L. Richards¹⁴ suggests that up to 25 small groups of about five families each should make up a congregation. Each group would be represented by one person on a council of the congregation and from that council five men would be chosen for the ministry of oversight in conjunction with the pastor. It would be a corporate episcopate in the fullest sense, and would make best use of the charismata. For example, a personnel manager would probably handle counselling and disciplinary matters better than the pastor who may have had only a minimal amount of training in this area. Within this group there may well be special areas of responsibility for each man with the pastor having responsibility for preaching and teaching.

The nature of the shared oversight should be limited to the matters of discipline, membership and internal programs. Plans for mission, evangelism, financial budgets, etc., would be made in Council by the representatives of the small groups to ensure that all members were represented in the decision making process and were properly informed about congregational plans.

14. Ibid., p.32ff.

Representatives from the congregation to higher committees of the denomination would need to truly represent the views of the congregation as expressed at the group Council meeting. As previously mentioned there has to be a move away from the attitude that ordained clergy do not have to represent the views of their own congregation to one in which they become true representatives of the congregation and thus enable the people to participate genuinely in mission at the widest level.

The suggestions made above will impinge in various ways on the polity of the denomination concerned and will raise the questions of who should be ordained for ministry and whether these should be for life or for a particular limited and local function. They will not of course remove the need for special theological training for some people although they may well affect its content. They may also mean that in times of initial growth there may not be justification for a paid minister of the Word. Whatever difficulties their implementation might entail is secondary to the need for developing a right understanding of the nature of the ministry of all believers and their individual and corporate responsibility for mission. Once these concepts are grasped and there is a desire to implement them, most denominations at the present time could meet the spirit if not the letter of such requirements.

With regard to the matter of training for ministers of the Word, it should be noted that the current method of recruitment and training produces men generally unsuited to the

task of helping members of congregations to grow in maturity. The tendency is to recruit young men at secondary school level, send them to the University for three years, then to Theological College for a further three years and finally, with occasionally a year's experience under another clergyman, to set them over a congregation. In most cases they live a privileged life by comparison with the majority of the community and during their theological training are not exposed as a rule to practical situations in which they could grow in their real understanding of the Christian life as distinct from knowledge about theological matters. This inexperience of life (the criticism would not apply to the men who have been converted later in life) means that it is very difficult, if not impossible, for them to help the members grow in grace because their teaching is not tied to the practical experience of the adequacy of Christ in all facets and problems of life. The Denominations need to revise their policy of accepting (albeit tentatively) eighteen year-olds for the Ministry and instead look to those, who having lived the Christian life for some years as an adult, and having displayed the necessary charismata have then received the call of God to the ministry of Word and Sacrament. Without analysing in detail the sociological aspects of the situation, it can be said that the current policy also maintains the so-called "middle class" nature of the denominations, and hence their un-credibility in the eyes of the working class. Not only have University men different living standards, they have often no knowledge of working-class life. Tom Allen¹⁵ laments that even though

15. Allen, T. "The Face of My Parish" SCM, London 1954.

he came from a working-class family, after his ministerial training he could no longer communicate easily with people of the working class. Acceptance of candidates at a later age would mean that they would be more likely to come out of all classes and hence be able to communicate with them. Current thinking in some circles in the United Kingdom¹⁶ is now more inclined to this view.

Only a small percentage of the community in Western Societies have tertiary education,- the vast majority have only secondary education or less (plus craft training in many cases) and therefore tertiary education is not necessary in order to communicate the Gospel to them. In the light of the increasing need to be able to communicate with people in their situation in life, it is necessary for the denominations to provide means of ensuring that their clergy are aware from experience of the problems of modern living and of the language patterns of the people amongst whom they work. The return to the so-called 'Tent-Making Ministry' with a revised concept of theological training, offers the possibility of regaining credibility in the eyes of the working people by those licensed to preach in the denominations. Newbiggin¹⁷ points to the value of this concept in rapidly-growing areas of India and reminds people that this was basically the approach suggested over fifty years ago by Roland Allen.¹⁸

16. See "The Shape of The Ministry", a report by the British Council of Churches, p. 50, where the questions of recruitment and training of older men is discussed.

17. See his article in "New Forms of Ministry", Paton, D.M. (Ed.) Edinburgh House, London 1965.

18. Allen, R. "Missionary Methods - St. Paul's or Ours?" World Dominion, London 1960 (5th Edn.)

There is of course need for more specialised studies demanding full-time application for those who will teach in Theological Colleges. Nevertheless, the principle of learning and working in practical situations needs to be maintained even in such cases. There is good reason therefore for seeing the full-time Theology lecturer as engaged in an occupation (in this case biblical teaching) and called to be a "part-time" or "spare-time" Minister of Word and Sacrament in a congregation as well. If the average member of the congregation is called to serve the congregation in his leisure time, there is no reason to expect less of the academically trained and ordained man in the way of service in the ecclesia in his spare time. Quite apart from questions of genuine sharing, this combination of responsibility in a local ecclesia with that of teaching would also inform and moderate the lecturer's instruction of those sitting under his teaching. He would be expected to participate in the life of the ecclesia as fully as any other member and be subject to them in mutual edification. His charisma would be recognised, if it was a genuine one, and he would enrich the ecclesia by it. Similarly the experience of real responsibility in the ecclesia would enrich his teaching.

Prayer

In the current emphasis on the servanthood of Jesus as the pattern of life for the ecclesia there is remarkable lack of emphasis on the need and place of prayer in His life as a pattern also for the ecclesia. If Jesus is the archetype man

whom the members of the ecclesia are called to emulate then it is surely necessary that prayer also must be a vital aspect of their individual and corporate lives, if they are to effectively continue His mission. The report on Priorities for Mission¹⁹ almost alone of current writings recognises this need and speaks about the necessity of "recovery of the power of prayer---as the true dynamic and inspiration of missionary engagement with the world". It goes on to speak of encouraging the prayer life of the small groups and of the need for teaching on the meaning of prayer. Brief and general though the section is, it is in accord with what we have seen of the life of the ecclesia in history at those times when it has been effective in its mission and witness. The prayer meeting which was a prominent feature of the immediate pre-revival and revival times has ceased to exist in the majority of congregations in the Western churches. (Less than 5% of the Church of Scotland congregations of Edinburgh appear to have a prayer meeting or any time of prolonged prayer). It may be observed from the history of the ecclesia and in the interdenominational movement today that the deeper the individual's commitment to Christ, the more likely he is to recognise the necessity of prayer and to engage in it in his own daily life and in concert with others. The small groups are the natural location for such corporate prayer which will come naturally as the members grow in their understanding and commitment - it cannot be forced

19. Church of Scotland Assembly Reports 1971 "Priorities For Mission in the 1970's", para. 94.

but has to be learnt from the maturer members. The small groups also provide the natural place in which to discuss the problems of prayer and to share the experiences of answered prayer. Joint gatherings of the groups of a congregation for prayer would be desirable from time to time as a means of mutual encouragement and fellowship. Gatherings with groups from other denominations which are sharing in mission in some particular area would also be vital to strengthen the bond of unity in mission.

Prayer needs to be closely related to mission and service, as was that of Jesus, in order that it may not become simply a pious exercise but rather be the means of mission and renewal. Conversely a proper concern for and participation in mission, both locally and in other parts of the world, is impossible without prayer. Until congregations return to this understanding it may be doubted whether they have a real understanding of or concern for mission. An indirect criterion for effectiveness in mission is therefore the extent to which the members of a congregation are involved in prayer corporately in an informed and purposeful manner.

Discipline and Standards

One of the Reformation "marks of the true church" was the right administration of discipline. Exactly what was meant by this term is not entirely clear today although some idea can be gained from descriptions of the way in which it was administered in those days. It would not be an exaggeration to say that at the present time discipline in

the biblical sense rarely takes place within the main Protestant denominations except in the case of flagrant moral breaches. Influenced to some extent by current psychological views, the prevailing attitude seems to be that the ecclesia should not be judgemental. Because God forgives sin, the argument runs, the ecclesia should do likewise and not take action concerning the sins and failures of its members. This view is however far removed from the biblical picture, where discipline, in the sense of reproof and rebuke and correction, was an integral part of the life of the ecclesia. It was applied in the case of moral as well as spiritual failings as the letters of the N.T. clearly demonstrate.

The question of discipline is closely linked to the concept of Christian maturity which is not widely understood in the denominations. Maturity implies having passed through the stages of growth in which rebuke, correction and guidance are necessary and arrived at a stage where these are no longer necessary because the necessary spiritual insights have been achieved together with their correlative behaviour. Thus discipline in the ecclesia is always directed to the end of spiritual maturity and is a necessary means to this end. Therefore to fail in administering discipline is to fail in Christian love. God chastens us for our own good (Hebrews 12) because He loves us and desires the fruit of righteousness in us. This He does through His appointed channel-session, deacon's court etc. Until the responsibility for exercising this discipline is taken seriously and in Christian love for the ones concerned, the ecclesia will remain full of men and

women who have not grown to maturity through lack of rebuke, guidance and correction. Disciplinary weakness may likewise endanger the effectiveness and the witness of the ecclesia in the world through failing to remove from the fellowship those who disqualify themselves by persistently rejecting the Christian standards and teachings.

To recover effectiveness in mission the ecclesia has to overcome the false idea that it has to be non-judgemental for this very attitude displays lack of responsibility and maturity. In other fields of human endeavour there is no lack of judgement and rigorously applied standards. Paul had no hesitation in denouncing moral and spiritual failures for the good of the persons concerned as well as the whole ecclesia. This has also been a characteristic of the effective church in history as was seen in the earlier brief surveys. The kind of discipline that is needed arises out of the maturity of Christian experience and understanding and is exercised after prayerful consideration of the matter by the presbuteroi for the good of the person concerned. (It follows that the newer Christians are to refrain from making judgements about others until they have grown to maturity.) The judgements that are required include the fitness of people to minister as teachers and leaders, as preachers of the Word etc., as well as on moral and spiritual issues that arise.

Discipline is also related to the maintenance of proper membership and specific functional standards. Basic to the proper exercise of discipline is a clear understanding of what membership of the ecclesia or performance of some responsibility

within the ecclesia entails. Too often there is not only vagueness in regard to such requirements but people are also loth to attempt to specify them. (There are of course many exceptions to this statement - for example the Church of The Saviour in Washington, D.C., has very firm minimum standards of membership and has as a consequence a dedicated and effective missionary effort.) There is need for clear, concise and simple statements or guides to Christian faith and practice. Similarly, for officebearers a clear guide to their responsibilities is needed in order that they may seek to fulfil their job to the best of their abilities. This need is shown for example by the decision of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia²⁰ to request "legislation defining the duties of Elder--so that elders may more adequately be informed of their promise 'faithfully to discharge the duties of the eldership'". Apart from revealing a situation that should never have occurred in the first place it also shows a step towards recovery. The ecclesia has much to learn from the secular business world that takes considerable pains and spends much money to define standards and responsibilities and to train men for higher positions by developing their capabilities. Through scripturally defined standards of membership, clear statements of responsibilities and by the exercise of loving discipline and judgements, the ecclesia can build itself up in love to more effective service for its Lord and Master who has entrusted to it the Gospel.

20. Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, Sept. 1970, Min. 102.

Records

It is not the purpose of this essay to spell out the nature of the records that should be kept in any congregation - once their value is realised as an aid to assessing growth in effectiveness in mission, the details can be easily determined locally. The annual review of the figures and their plotting in suitable graphical form will reveal trends in the life and the mission of the ecclesia in time for corrective action to be taken where necessary. It will also, if the statistics are properly evaluated, prevent unnecessary or precipitate action on the basis of hunches or feelings.

Much of the present day denominational confusion concerning mission is due to inadequate statistics. Trends and deficiencies should have been quantitatively observed years ago and corrective action instituted. The very fact that the Church of Scotland had to appoint a Commission on the Priorities of Mission indicated that it did not know just what the real situation was and which areas needed particular attention. (It is by no means untypical). It was unfortunate therefore that the Commission's report did not document the situation with relevant statistical information. This led to controversy in the Assembly over many of the recommendations because some of the Assembly members thought that suitable action had already been taken. This lack of clarity of the actual state of affairs exists in most if not all denominations and it will not be rectified until proper statistical records are kept. Then it will be possible for the resources to be channelled into the most necessary projects rather than being spread diffusely and unproductively over a broad spectrum of activities.

Measurement of Effectiveness

In his book McGavran²¹ emphasises the need for accurate statistical records of each congregation and groups of congregations in order that the true state of the ecclesia can be ascertained. Whilst agreeing with his general contention that the church which is effective in mission grows in numbers, the counting of heads only is an oversimplification of the situation. (The opposite view, - that we must get rid of the head-counting syndrome, has been dismissed in Chapter one as unrealistic.) R. Currie²² has suggested recording growth in terms of a percentage of the total population in order to give a better picture of the growth or decline of the ecclesia. This too, is not entirely satisfactory where the possible contacts in a given area remain static even though national figures show an increase in the total population. McGavran has also suggested that the increase in numbers should be divided into those who come from the families already within the ecclesia and those who "are converted from the world", so as to gain a better idea of the missionary effectiveness of the ecclesia. Even these figures need to be modified by factors which take account of the age distribution of the local particular population and the degree of mobility of the population. For example in a population of predominantly elderly people, the congregation could in fact be thriving even though for a while total membership figures were declining due to the high death rate

21. McGavran, D. "Understanding Church Growth" p.83ff, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1970.

22. Currie, R. "Methodism Divided" p.89ff, Faber & Faber, London 1968.

of members. Conversely, in the following period of time, with an influx of young married couples to the vacant houses, an increase in membership due to transfer, baptism etc. could mask a period of ineffective mission if only total figures are used. Assessment of effectiveness in mission requires therefore the proper keeping and interpretation of statistics.

Increase of membership by itself even after allowing for the factors mentioned above is an insufficient criterion of effectiveness in mission. Equally important is the degree to which the members actually participate in mission rather than merely attend worship sessions. Statistics indicating stewardship of time and money can also give a pointer to the effectiveness of the ecclesia in fulfilling the *Missio Dei*. Two cautions must be given. Firstly, there is no absolute figure that can be made the criterion of success - real growth of stewardship is what is needed. It is clear that in a new congregation there may be little evidence of responsible stewardship for some time until members have started to grow in their understanding of the nature of the Christian life. Secondly the effect of external factors such as drought, financial recession etc., must be properly assessed when evaluating the statistics.

Concerning the stewardship of money, some further comments are needed. Wells and other fund-raisers have demonstrated that it is possible, by the use of a few psychological tricks (e.g. by the question "you send your children to Sunday School, surely you wouldn't want to leave

it to others to support the work?", etc.) and by some unbiblical teaching (e.g., "after you have worked out all your possible expenses and put aside something for a rainy day, make a sacrificial gift from the remainder") - to bring in large sums of money for the ecclesia. Time usually demonstrates that these methods produce only temporary responses because they do not stem from a biblical understanding of stewardship. They have to be repeated, usually at great effort, in order to be able to pay for those things to which the church in the meantime has committed itself. As with the stewardship of time, the proper stewardship of possessions hinges on the relationship that the person sees himself in with regard to God. Material things have a temporal currency only and their use, biblically, is both an aspect of God's grace to us and a means of fulfilling His Mission. The parable of the prodigal son demonstrates firstly the wrong use of possessions and secondly, amongst other aspects of the Father's nature, that not only are all the things of God available to the wise son but also that all things are provided for his needs. The ecclesia needs to recover this insight of trustful stewardship.

Old Testament
 In the ~~O.T.~~ the people of God were required to pay a tithe to support the Levitical priesthood, to pay Temple tax and in addition, to provide for the poor. From time to time 'special causes' would require the giving of more possessions, - such as the levy for the building of the Temple in Jerusalem. Redemption of land and the care of relatives were also the responsibility of the Israelite as well as

liberality to released servants. It has been estimated that the devout Israelite would have contributed as much as one fifth or one quarter of his income each year in these ways. In the ~~OT~~^{New Testament}, this legal pattern is superseded and Jesus Christ becomes the pattern for giving and living - "He became poor for our sakes" - "He gave his life for us". The apostolic ecclesia at Jerusalem demonstrated the way in which stewardship of possessions worked out. They had all things in common - they sold land and brought the proceeds for the apostles to use. Their concern for the needs of others was their motivation. From the record in the book of Acts, there was no shortage of money to be used in the mission of the ecclesia, whether it was for the alleviation of the needs of widows or the support of its missionaries. The early ecclesia clearly went beyond the limit of the tithe in giving - they were not bound by any legalism in this regard for we read that they "gave beyond their means" (2 Cor. 8:3). Likewise, Christ's comment on the offering of the poor widow in the Temple is indicative of the nature of stewardship as the offering of all to God and, in faith, resting on His promises that all our needs will be met. Thus whilst it is true that the tithe is not obligatory on the Christian, it can nevertheless be used as a standard for stewardship of possessions, albeit a minimum one. The congregations stewardship of possessions would be calculated on the average rate of giving of members in a Church in terms of the average income of members.

Stewardship of time cannot be measured as easily as that of money, nevertheless it can be used as a criteria of effectiveness because it indicates the degree of personal involvement in mission, i.e., in being a missionary. Much of secular working time may be counted as genuine participation in mission but this varies from job to job and from week to week. It is essential therefore to use some such basis as listing the total hours per week given, over and above secular employment and normal attendance at worship, to serving the total mission of the ecclesia. It may be in hospital visiting, or gardening for elderly people, or in Sunday School teaching or in preparation for leading a fellowship group, or in some activity for social justice for immigrants etc. As with money, there is no legal requirement to be met, yet any effective missionary congregation would always have sufficient manpower available for its work and would be producing those who were willing to serve full-time in mission on behalf of the ecclesia, either locally or elsewhere. More importantly, the total stewardship of time of the whole congregation should show growth on a per capita basis.

In many countries of the West, the State has taken over educational, medical, and welfare responsibilities that were once the concern of the ecclesia. In such cases there is not normally need for the ecclesia to provide these services through fully financially-supported institutions. Or, where there are such institutions run by the ecclesia, these can in most instances be made self supporting and hence no financial burden on congregations. In such conditions the ecclesia

should be encouraging its members to serve in these institutions as a matter of Christian mission, and as a form of witness. Like every other member of the congregation, such people would also be expected to contribute directly to the mission of the ecclesia in their spare time.

Conclusions

In spite of the polarisation of views noted in earlier chapters concerning the nature of mission and ministry in ecumenical and denominational circles, it has been shown that there is a way forward, or rather backwards to the recovery of effectiveness in mission. The patterns and self-understandings of the early ecclesia, as set out in the ^{New Testament} ~~N.T.~~ not only were effective at that time but also at different times in history and under widely varying sociological conditions. The Pentecostal movement and the growing inter-denominational groups, both of whom manifest many of these same characteristics, indicate that the ecclesia can also be effective in its outreach in secular society. (Although the evidence quoted for Pentecostalism related mainly to Chile, it is also a rapidly growing movement in the U.S.A. and Western Europe.) The reality of the ministry of the whole congregation and the importance of the development of fellowship, which have always characterised the ecclesia in times of renewal and revival have received the imprimatur of recent biblical scholarship. Recent constitutions for uniting churches have provided for some of the needs set out earlier - the COCU plan for example does give more representation in

determining Mission plans to the local members than some of the uniting denominations provided. It does allow for more flexible use of theologically trained men, including part-time ministry. It would be true to say that no denominational constitution yet embodies a proper understanding of the ministry of the whole laos nor of the nature of the small group as the place for exercising this ministry.

The contention of this essay has been that the ecclesia is intended to be an effective instrument in the Mission of God. It has been shown that this is possible as it returns to the patterns of the ^{New Testament} ~~N.T.~~ ecclesia. It has been further concluded, from the discussion in this chapter, that the necessary changes can be accommodated within most existing denominational structures - that is to say, there is no insurmountable barrier to the recovery of effectiveness at the present time given the right intentions. The greatest problems are the acceptance of the concept that every member of the local congregation is a minister of Christ who shares in Mission with every other member and the provision of means whereby they can have a genuine participation in mission both locally and internationally. That this is occurring on a limited scale at the present time should be sufficient encouragement to seek renewal for the whole People of God.

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